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SELECT EULOGIES
OF
MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY,
WITH NOTES;

By THE LATE M. D'ALEMBERT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,
WITH A PREFACE AND ADDITIONAL NOTES,
BY J. AIKIN, M. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

JEAN LE ROND D'ALEMBERT, the author of the subsequent pieces, is well known throughout Europe as one of the most illustrious individuals of what may be termed the last school of French literature. A juvenile proficient in a variety of studies, he first attained celebrity as a mathematician, in which quality he early entered the Academy of Sciences. He had become a distinguished member of this learned society, when he was received into the French Academy as a fine writer; and few have in a more eminent degree united a superiority in these two very distinct, and commonly deemed adverse, departments of intellectual pursuit. But his mind had taken a wide range, as is manifestly shewn by

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his masterly view of human knowledge in general, prefixed to the French Encyclopædia, of which celebrated work he is said to have been the original projector. A variety of miscellaneous writings proved him also to be well acquainted with mankind, and with the topics most immediately interesting to society; and that, to the man of science and polite scholar, he added the moralist and philosopher. Such was his reputation, that he was strongly urged by the late empress of Russia to undertake the education of her son, the grand duke; and that the great Frederic of Prussia sought his friendship, and maintained an intimate correspondence with him. All the principal learned societies in Europe thought themselves honoured by inrolling his name in their lists of members. The French Academy, on the death of their secretary Duclos, in 1772, appointed him to the vacant post; and it was in this capacity that he composed those eulogies

eulogies of many of its associates, of which the present publication is a selection.

His connections, his writings, and especially his distinguished place among the Encyclopedists, sufficiently declare him to have been of the number of those French literati, who were actively, though cautiously, employed in bringing about a change in the public opinion concerning civil and religious subjects. That this *change* was in many respects *improvement*, will scarcely be denied by one who is sensible of his happiness in living in a country which has experienced the benefit of similar alterations; and from which, in reality, almost all the freedom of thinking that has pervaded Europe has taken its immediate rise. That d'Alembert and his associates, taking their departure, as it were, from a religious system full of tyranny, absurdity, and superstition, should go further in a contrary direction than most of those who among us have promoted liberal

A 4 opinions,

opinions, was so natural, that a moderate degree of philosophical candour will suffice to plead its apology. Systems which arrogantly spurn the examination of reason, and rely principally upon fraud or force for their support, have no right to expect any remaining deference or attachment from those who have once broken the fetters of prejudice in their favour. They cannot in any degree ally with what they professedly discard and anathematise; and the war once commenced between them and free inquiry, can only terminate with the complete overthrow of one of the combatants.

D'Alembert deserves praise for having treated religious subjects with more decorum and reserve than many of his contemporaries; and there is reason to believe that he sincerely respected the sanctions which the pure principles of religion afford to morality, and was far from wishing to impair them. Neither does he appear to
have

have been tainted, except in a slight degree, with that baneful corruption in morals which was the real disgrace of the French philosophical school, and has laid the foundation of incalculable mischiefs. His opinions respecting government and the social state do not, in any of his writings, surpass the limits of a liberty compatible with law, order, and all that conduces to the essential security of the public welfare. It is true, he appears to have been as little the friend of political as of religious superstition, and to have estimated rank and prerogative only by their value in promoting that general good which is the proper end of civil institutions. That he was one of those who by their writings prepared the way for those awful, and in many respects truly deplorable events, which have lately taken place in his country, cannot be denied; but to make him responsible for measures which he could not have foreseen, which

which he would have warmly deprecated, and to which he would probably have fallen a victim, would be unjustifiable rigour; especially as he contributed to them only in common with all the writers ancient and modern, Greek, Roman, Italian, French, and, above all, English, who have applied philosophy to the investigation of the rights and duties of mankind.

Though deeply involved in literary party, and much engaged in attack and defence on his own account and that of his friends, d'Alembert maintained a high character and much influence as long as he lived; to which many excellent qualities of the heart as well as the head contributed. He was eminently disinterested, upright, grateful, and obliging; and though he has been charged with artifice, yet his works contain many proofs of undisguised zeal for the cause of his friends, and of abhorrence of the dark machinations

tions of calumny and malevolence. In the possession of undiminished reputation, he died at the age of sixty-six, on October 29th, 1783.

To speak more particularly of the work now offered to the public.—D'Alembert published, in 1779, the first volume of a “History of the Members of the French Academy who died between 1700 and 1771; being a Sequel to the Eulogies printed and read at the public Sittings of the Society.” In the advertisement prefixed to this volume, he mentions having written many more eulogies than are there given, and likewise having drawn up a number of notes upon them, which he thought proper to suppress for the present. Though this work experienced a very favourable reception, the author did not produce any additional volumes during his life-time; but, after his death, his friend the marquis de Condorcet, to whom the materials had been confided, published, in
1787,

1787, five more volumes, containing many new eulogies, with the notes belonging to the whole. It is to be observed, that academical eulogies, which were originally mere insipid or inflated panegyrics, had been rendered, by the philosophical spirit of Fontenelle and other eminent writers, valuable pieces of literary biography, enriched with just and free criticisms on life and letters. D'Alembert was not a person likely to suffer the improved character of these pieces to deteriorate in his hands; and the spirit of the times permitted an advance in freedom, of which he was not backward to avail himself. At the same time his extensive acquaintance with anecdote gave him the opportunity of enlivening his draughts with a variety of incidental matter. The collection of his eulogies has accordingly been read with avidity, and considered as a very valuable addition to French literature. The present translator has selected from it those articles

articles which appeared to him most likely to engage an English reader, as well as to afford that variety of subject which might display the author's sentiments upon the most interesting topics. In executing his task, he has scrupulously adhered to what he regards as the first duty of a translator, though a negative one—that of refraining from putting into his author's mouth a single sentiment, expression, or even epithet, which is not strictly his. He has, however, thought himself justified in making certain omissions, the nature of which he proceeds to explain.

D'Alembert, with all his merit as a writer, is prolix in his style, and often employs a profusion of words and images, by which his meaning is rather weakened than enforced. Moreover, in giving scope to reflections, he is apt to accumulate one upon another, or start aside to collateral matter, so as to involve the thread of discourse,

course, and embarrass the reader. The translator has occasionally ventured, according to his judgment, to correct these faults by moderate pruning, yet without attempting to alter the general colour of the author's style. These slight retrenchments are the whole of his omissions in the *eulogies themselves*, except in a few instances, where he has sacrificed sentences or clauses, on account of repetitions or redundancies. But with respect to the *notes*, he has used much greater liberties, both in abridging the language, omitting clauses, and leaving out whole articles, when containing matter which appeared to him either not likely to interest an English reader, or capable of giving just offence. He believes he may now confidently present this selection to the public, as being free from any thing that can excite displeasure in the enlightened friend of order, religion, and good morals. On

the contrary, he hopes that the work will be found highly favourable to all these great interests.

With respect to his own notes, he submits them, without remark, to the candour of his readers,

the country. He hopes that his work will
be found to be of some use to all those
great minds.
With respect to his own work, he has
just finished a book on the subject of
of his readers.

EULOGY

OF

MASSILLON,

BISHOP OF CLERMONT*.

JOHAN-BAPTIST MASSILLON was born in 1663 at Hieres in Provence. His father was a poor citizen of that small city. The obscurity of his birth, which gives such a relief to the splendour of his personal merit, should be the first topic of his praise; and it may be said of him, as of that

* This Eulogy, read on the 4th of August 1774, was the first the author delivered at the public sittings of the French Academy.

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illustrious

illustrious Roman who owed nothing to his ancestors, "Videtur ex se natus,—
 "He was the son of himself alone." But his humble origin not only reflects high honour upon his own person; it is still more honourable to that enlightened government, which, having taken him from the midst of the people to place him at the head of one of the most extensive dioceses of the kingdom, confronted the prejudice too common even in our days, that Providence has not destined great places to the genius which it has produced in the lower ranks of society: if the disposers of ecclesiastical dignities had not possessed the wisdom, courage, or good fortune, sometimes to forget this maxim of human vanity, the French clergy would have been deprived of the glory of reckoning the eloquent Maffillon among their bishops.

After finishing his grammatical studies, at the age of seventeen he entered into the
 Oratory.

Oratory. Resolved to consecrate his labours to the church, he preferred to the indissoluble bonds which he might have assumed in some one of our very numerous religious orders, the free engagements contracted in a congregation on which the great Bossuet has bestowed this rare eulogy,—“ That every one obeys, yet no one commands.” Massillon preserved to the close of his life the most tender and pleasing recollection of the lessons he had received and the principles he had imbibed in this truly respectable society, which, without intrigue and ambition, cherishing and cultivating literature through the sole wish of being useful, has acquired a distinguished name in the sacred and profane sciences; and which, sometimes persecuted, and almost always little favoured, even by those from whom it might expect support, has done all the good it was permitted to do, without injuring a single person, even an enemy; which, in fine, has at all times

obtained the regard of the wife, by practising religion without littleness, and preaching it without fanaticism.

Maffillon's superiors soon formed a presage, from his first essays, of the honour he would confer on the congregation. They destined him to the pulpit; but it was only from obedience that he consented to fulfil their intentions: he alone did not foresee the celebrity with which they flattered him, and which was to be the recompence of his modesty and submission. There are some confident minds which recognize, as it were by instinct, the object marked out for them by nature, and seize it with vigour; while others, humble and timid, require to be apprized of their powers, and by this honest ignorance of themselves are rendered only the more interesting, and the more worthy of being snatched from obscurity and presented to the renown which awaits them.

The

The young Maffillon at first did what he could to withdraw himself from this glory. He had already, from pure obedience, while yet in the province, pronounced funeral orations on M. de Villeroy, archbishop of Lyons, and M. de Villars, archbishop of Vienne; and these two discourses, which were indeed first attempts, but attempts of a young man who already announced what he afterwards became, had the most brilliant success. The humble orator, affrighted at his rising reputation, and fearing, as he said, "the demon of pride," resolved to escape from him for ever, by devoting himself to the profoundest and even most austere retirement. He went and buried himself in the abbey of Sept-fons, where the same rule is followed as at la Trappe, and there took the habit. During his noviciate, the cardinal de Noailles sent to the abbot of Sept-fons, whose virtue he respected, a charge which he had just published. The

abbot, more religious than eloquent, but still retaining a degree of self-love, at least on account of his community, wished to make the prelate a reply worthy of his charge. He committed the task to his ex-oratorian novice, and Massillon executed it with as much success as promptness. The cardinal, astonished at receiving from this Thebais a work so well written, was not afraid of wounding the vanity of the pious abbot by asking him who was the author. The abbot named Massillon; and the prelate told him that it was not fit such a genius should, in the scripture-pharse, remain "hidden under a bushel." He required the novice to quit his habit, and resume that of the Oratory; and he placed him in the seminary of St. Magloire at Paris, with an exhortation to cultivate pulpit-eloquence. At the same time he took upon himself, as he said, the care of the young orator's *fortune*; which Massillon limited to that of the apostles, that is,

is, to the merest necessities, and the most exemplary simplicity.

His first sermons produced the effect that his superiors and the cardinal de Noailles had foreseen. Scarcely did he begin to shew himself in the pulpits of Paris, than he eclipsed almost all those who at that period shone in the same career. He had declared "that he would not preach like them," not through a presumptuous confidence in his superiority, but through an equally just and mature idea that he had formed of Christian eloquence. He was persuaded that if the minister of God's word on the one hand degrades himself by uttering common truths in trivial language, on the other, he misses his purpose by thinking to captivate his audience with a long chain of reasoning which they are incapable of following: he knew that if all hearers are not blessed with an informed mind, all have a heart, whence the preacher ought

to seek his arms ; that, in the pulpit, man ought to be shewn to himself, not so much to disgust him by a shocking portrait, as to afflict him by the resemblance ; and, in fine, that if it is sometimes useful to alarm and disquiet him, it is still more so to draw from him those tears of sensibility, which are much more efficacious than the tears of despair.

Such was the plan Maffillon proposed to himself, and he executed it like one who had conceived it ; that is, like a master. He excels in that part of oratory which may stand in stead of all the rest,—that eloquence which goes right to the soul, but which agitates without confounding, appals without crushing, penetrates without lacerating it : he goes to the bottom of the heart in search of those hidden folds in which the passions are enwrapt,—those secret sophisms which they so artfully employ to blind and seduce us. To combat and destroy these sophisms, it
merely

merely suffices him to develope them ; but he does it in a language so affectionate and tender, that he subdues less than he attracts ; and even in displaying before us the picture of our vices, he knows how to attach and please us. His diction, always easy, elegant, and pure, never deviates from that noble simplicity without which there is neither good taste nor genuine eloquence. This simplicity, being joined in Massillon to the softest and most seducing harmony, borrows from it still new graces ; and, what completes the charm of this enchanting style is, that so many beauties are felt to flow freely from the spring, without expence to their author. Sometimes, even, there escape from him, either in the expressions, the turns, or the sweet melody of his periods, negligences which may be called happy, since they perfectly efface not only the stamp, but even the suspicion, of labour. It was by this inattention to self that Massillon made

as many friends as auditors : he knew that the more an orator seems occupied in catching admiration, the less his hearers are disposed to grant it ; and that this ambition is the rock fatal to so many preachers, who, entrusted (if I may so express myself) with the interests of God himself, chuse to mix with it the little interests of their vanity. Massillon, on the contrary, thought it a very empty pleasure “ to have “ to do,” as Montaigne expresses it, “ with “ people who always admire and make “ way for us ;” especially at those seasons when it is so delightful to forget one’s-self, in order to be solely occupied with those feeble and unfortunate beings whom duty enjoins to console and instruct. He compared the studied eloquence of profane preachers, to those flowers which stifle the products of harvest, and, though very agreeable to the sight, are equally hurtful to the crop.

It

It seemed wonderful that a man, devoted by station to retirement, should know the world so well as to draw such exact pictures of the passions, especially of self-love. "I have learned to draw them," he candidly said, "by studying myself." He proved it in a manner equally energetic and ingenuous, by his confession to one of his brethren, who congratulated him on the success of his sermons: "The devil," he replied, "has already told it me more eloquently than you."

Maffillon derived another advantage from that eloquence of the soul which he so well understood; as, in speaking to the heart of man, he spoke the language of all conditions, all went to hear his sermons; even unbelievers attended upon him, and often met with instruction where they only sought amusement. The reason was, that Maffillon knew how to descend on their account to the only language they would hear, that of a philosophy, purely human
in

in appearance, but which, finding every access to their hearts open, prepared the way for the Christian orator to approach them without effort and unresisted, and to obtain a conquest even without a combat.

His action was perfectly suited to his species of eloquence: on entering the pulpit, he appeared thoroughly penetrated with the great truths he was about to utter: with eyes declined, a modest and collected air, without violent motions, and almost without gestures, but animating the whole with a voice of sensibility, he diffused over his audience the religious emotion which his own exterior proclaimed, and caused himself to be listened to with that profound silence by which eloquence is better praised than by the loudest applause. The reputation of his manner alone induced the celebrated Baron to attend on one of his discourses: on leaving the church, he said to a friend who accompanied

accompanied him, " This man is an orator,
 " and we are only players."

The court soon wished to hear him, or rather to judge him. Without pride, as without fear, he appeared on this great and formidable theatre. He opened with distinguished lustre; and the exordium of his first discourse is one of the master-strokes of modern eloquence. Lewis XIV. was then at the summit of power and glory, admired by all Europe, adored by his subjects, intoxicated with adulation, and fatiated with homage. Massillon took for his text a passage of scripture apparently least applicable to such a prince; " Blessed are they that mourn;" and from this he had the art to draw an eulogy the more novel and flattering, as it seemed dictated by the gospel itself, and such as a apostle might have made. " Sire," said he, " if the world were here speaking to your majesty, it would not address you with ' Blessed are they that
 1 " mourn ;'

" mourn ; ' Blessed,' would it say, ' the
 " prince who never fought but to con-
 " quer ; who has filled the universe with
 " his name ; who, in the course of a long
 " and flourishing reign, has enjoyed with
 " splendour all that men admire, the
 " greatness of his conquests, the love of
 " his people, the esteem of his enemies,
 " the wisdom of his laws : '—but, sire, the
 " gospel speaks not as the world speaks."

The audience of Versailles, accustomed
 as they were to the Bossuets and Bour-
 daloues, were unacquainted with an elo-
 quence at the same time so delicate and so
 noble : in consequence, it excited in the
 assembly, notwithstanding the gravity of
 the place, an involuntary expression of ad-
 miration. There only wanted, to render
 this passage still more impressive, that it
 should have been pronounced in the midst
 of the misfortunes which succeeded our
 triumphs, and at a time when the mo-
 narch, who, during fifty years had expe-
 rienced

rienced nothing but prosperity, lived only to sorrow *. If ever, Lewis XIV. heard a more eloquent exordium, it was perhaps that of a religious missionary, who, on his first appearance before the king, thus began his discourse:—"Sire, I mean not "to pay a compliment to your majesty, "I have found none in the gospel."

Truth, even when it speaks in the name of God, ought to content itself with knocking at the door of kings, and should never break it open. Massillon, convinced of this maxim, did not imitate some of his predecessors, who had displayed their zeal by preaching Christian morality in the mansions of vice with an austerity capable of rendering it odious, and of exposing religion to the resentment of haughty and offended power. Our orator was always firm, but always respectful, while he announced to his sovereign the will of the Judge of kings. He filled the measure of

* See NOTE I.

his ministry, but he never surpassed it; and the monarch, who might have left his chapel discontented with the liberty of some other preachers, never left it after a sermon of Massillon, but “discontented with himself.” These were the very words of the prince to this orator; words which contained the highest eulogy he could give; yet one, which so many preachers before and since Massillon have not even wished to obtain, while they were more solicitous to please the critics than to convert sinners *. †

Successes

* See NOTE II.

† It is not easy to comprehend the writer’s meaning in the above clause, the beginning of which is not very consistent with its conclusion. If it be intended to inculcate the necessity of management in preaching divine truths to monarchs, that they may not take offence, the example of Lewis XIV. himself may be brought to prove the inefficacy of such a method, since, notwithstanding the eloquence of his preachers, he lived in open adultery till he was an old

Successes so brilliant and repeated did not fail of their usual effect; they created Massillon implacable enemies, especially among those who considered themselves as his rivals. Their aim was, if possible, to shut the mouth of so formidable a competitor; but this was only to be done by an accusation against his doctrine, and on this delicate point the preacher gave not the least scope to their charitable intentions. He was, indeed, member of a con-

old man; and never ceased to ruin his people by vain expences and unjust wars, as long as he was able to raise money. Massillon might knock audibly at the door of his heart, but it could be changed only by one who resolutely broke in. To one who recognizes no superior but God, that superiority should be brought home with all possible force, if it is to counteract the effects of constant flattery and submission from man. It may be acknowledged, however, that a public discourse is not the place for these close appeals; and a court chaplain may be satisfied if he makes his vicious sovereign "discontented with himself." TRANSL.

gregation, the opinions of which were then much the object of suspicion ; and through this pious consideration, several of his brethren had been dexterously excluded from the pulpit of Versailles. But Massillon's sentiments, daily exposed to court criticism, were so irreproachably orthodox, that they baffled the keenest scrutiny of hatred. The church and the nation already destined him to the episcopacy ; and envy, usually blind to its own interests, might, with subtler policy, have regarded this dignity as a decent mode of burying his talents, by banishing him to a distance from Paris and the court. It did not carry so far its dangerous penetration ; but considering a bishopric only in the light of a splendid recompence, it resolved to make a last effort to deprive the orator of what he had so well merited. The means employed were to calumniate his morals ; and, according to custom, ears were found ready to hear, and hearts to believe, the charge.

charge. The sovereign himself, so artful is falsehood in insinuating itself to the presence of monarchs, was shaken, if not convinced ; and the same prince who had told Massillon, “ that he meant to hear “ him every two years,” seemed to fear giving to another church the orator he had reserved to himself.

Lewis XIV. died ; and the régent, who honoured the talents of Massillon, and despised his enemies, nominated him to the bishopric of Clermont. He wished also that the court should hear him once more ; and engaged him to preach a Lent course before the king, then nine years of age.

These sermons, composed in less than three months, are known by the name of *Petit Carême* (Little Lent). They are perhaps, if not the master-piece, at least the true model, of pulpit eloquence. The great sermons of this orator may have more animation and vehemence ; the elo-

quence of the *Petit Carême* is more pathetic and insinuating ; and the charm resulting from it is augmented by the interesting nature of the subject, and by the inestimable value of those simple and affecting lessons which, intended to penetrate with equal force and softness the heart of a monarch yet a child, seem to prepare the happiness of millions of men, by shewing what they have a right to expect from the prince who is to govern them. Here the preacher places before the eyes of sovereigns the dangers and the evils of supreme power ; truth flying the throne, and concealing herself even from the princes who seek her ; the presumptuous confidence with which even the justest praises may inspire them ; the almost equal danger of that weakness which has no opinion of its own, and that pride which never listens to another's ; the fatal influence of their vices in corrupting and debasing a whole nation ; the detestable glory of conquer-
ing

ing kings, cruelly purchased by blood and tears ; in fine, the Supreme Being himself, placed between oppressor kings and oppressed people, to intimidate the one and avenge the other : such is the object of the *Petit Carême*, worthy of being learned by all children destined to the throne, and meditated by all men entrusted with governing the world. Some severe censurers, however, have charged these excellent discourses with being too uniform and monotonous : they contain, according to them, but a single idea constantly recurring,—that of the kindness and beneficence due from the great and powerful of the earth to the little and feeble, whom Nature has created their fellows, Humanity has made their brethren, and Fortune has doomed to wretchedness. But, without inquiring into the justice of this censure, we may say that the truth here mentioned is so consolatory to all who groan under affliction, so precious in the education of a

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prince,

prince, and especially so necessary to be impressed on the callous hearts of courtiers, that humanity may bless the orator who has inculcated it with so much force and perseverance *.

The year in which Massillon pronounced these discourses was that in which he entered the French Academy. The date of his admission was February 23d, 1719. The abbé Fleury, who received him in his capacity of director, among other praises, gave him that of having accommodated his instructions to the tender age of the king. " You seem," said he, " to have imitated the prophet, who, in order to resuscitate the son of the Shunamite, contracted as it were his dimensions, by placing his mouth upon the mouth, his eyes upon the eyes, his hands upon the hands, of the child; and having thus recalled the vital heat, restored him alive and vigorous to his mother."

* See NOTE III.

The director's discourse contains another passage equally edifying and remarkable. Maffillon had just been consecrated a bishop; and no place at court, no business, no pretext could be urged to keep him from his diocese. The abbé Fleury, an inflexible observer of the canons, while he admitted the new member, had his eyes fixed upon the rigorous duties which the episcopacy imposed upon him, in comparison with which, those of academician entirely disappeared. Far, then, from inviting him to frequent attendance on the academy, he exhorted him to a perpetual absence; and he rendered his counsel more cogent by the obliging manner in which he expressed his regret for its necessity. "We foresee with grief," said he, "that we are about to lose you *for ever*, "and that the *indispensable* law of residence "will sequester you without return from "our assemblies: we cannot hope to see "you again, but when some *vexatious* "business

“ business shall, *in spite of yourself*, tear
 “ you from your church *.”

This counsel had the more weight, as he to whom it was addressed had already given it himself. He departed for Clermont, and only returned on indispensable, consequently rare, occasions. He gave all his cares to the happy flock entrusted to him by Providence. He did not conceive that his episcopal function, which he had acquired in consequence of his success in the pulpit, gave him a dispensation from again ascending it, and that he ought to cease being useful because he had been rewarded. He consecrated to the instruction of the poor those talents which had so often been applauded by the great; and preferred, to the noisy praises of courtiers, the simple and serious attention of a less brilliant but more docile audience. Perhaps the most eloquent of his discourses are his conferences with his clergy*. He

* See NOTE V.

preaches to them the virtues of which he gave the example;—disinterestedness, simplicity, forgetfulness of self, the active and prudent ardour of enlightened zeal, widely different from that fanaticism which is only a blind, and often a very suspicious zeal: moderation was, indeed, his ruling character. He loved to assemble at his country-seat Oratorians and Jesuits, whom he accustomed to endure, and almost to love each other. He set them to play together at chess, and exhorted them never to engage in more serious warfare *. The conciliatory spirit which shone in his conduct, and his well-known sentiments on the scandal of theological quarrels, caused the government to wish that he should try to bring to an agreement the cardinal de Noailles, and those who attacked the doctrine of this pious archbishop; but his impartiality in this negotiation produced its usual effect, of dissatisfying both parties.

* See NOTE VI.

His

His sage remonstrances in favour of peace and union were fruitless; and he learned by his own experience, that it is often easier to persuade unbelievers, than to reconcile those who have so much interest in uniting to confound them*.

Deeply penetrated with the real obligations of his station, Massillon was especially attentive to fulfil that first and most respectable of episcopal duties, the duty, or rather the pleasure, of beneficence. He reduced his rights as bishop to very moderate sums, and would entirely have abolished them, had he not thought himself obliged to respect the patrimony of his successors, that is, to leave them wherewith to perform good actions. Within two years he sent twenty thousand livres to the hospital of Clermont. All his revenue belonged to the poor. His diocese preserves the remembrance of his deeds after thirty

* See NOTE VII.

years ; and his memory is daily honoured with the most eloquent of funeral orations, that of the tears of one hundred thousand distressed objects. During his life-time he had anticipated this testimony. When he appeared in the streets of Clermont, the people prostrated themselves before him, crying, " Long live our father ! " Hence it was a frequent observation of this virtuous prelate, that his episcopal brethren did not sufficiently feel the degree of consideration and authority they might derive from their station ; not, indeed, by pomp, or by a punctilious devotion, still less by the grimaces and intrigues of hypocrisy, but by those virtues which are recognised by the hearts of the people, and which, in a minister of true religion, represent to all eyes that just and beneficent Being of which he is the image.

Among the countless alms he gave, there were some which he concealed with

the greatest care, not only to favour the delicacy of unfortunate individuals, but sometimes to spare whole communities the sensation of inquietude and fear, however groundless, which these donations might occasion them. A numerous convent of nuns had for several days been without bread. The sisterhood had resolved to perish rather than make known their shocking distress, through the apprehension that it might cause the suppression of their house, to which they were more attached than to life. The bishop of Clermont learned at the same time their extreme necessity, and the motive of their silence. Eager to give them relief, he was fearful of alarming them by seeming informed of their situation; he therefore secretly sent them a very considerable sum, which rendered their subsistence secure, till he had found means to provide them with other resources; and it was not till after his death that they became acquainted with

with the benefactor to whom they were so greatly indebted.

He not only lavished his fortune upon the indigent; he further assisted them, with equal zeal and success, by his pen. Being a witness, in his diocesan visits, of the wretchedness under which the inhabitants of the country groaned, and finding his revenue insufficient to supply with bread so many miserable creatures who asked it, he wrote to the court in their favour; and by the strong and affecting picture he drew of their necessities, he obtained for them either donations, or a considerable diminution of their taxes. His letters on this interesting subject are said to be masterpieces of pathetic eloquence, superior to the most touching of his sermons*.

The more sincerely he respected religion, the more he despised the superstitions which degrade it, and the more zealous

* See NOTE VIII.

he was to destroy them. He abolished, though not without difficulty, some very ancient and very indecent processions which the barbarism of the dark ages had established in his diocese, and which travestied the divine worship into a scandalous masquerade. The inhabitants of Clermont were used to run to these exhibitions in crowds, some through a stupid devotion, others to turn this religious farce into ridicule. The clergy of the city, through fear of the people, who were attached to these shows in proportion to their absurdity, dared not publish the mandate for their suppression. Massillon ascended the pulpit, published his own mandate, and caused himself to be heard by a tumultuous audience who would have insulted any other preacher:—such was the fruit of his virtue and beneficence!

He died, as Fenelon died, and as every bishop ought to die, without money and
without

without debts*. It was on the 28th of September 1742, that the church, eloquence, and humanity, sustained this irreparable loss.

A recent incident, well calculated to affect feeling hearts, affords a proof how dear the memory of Massillon is, not only to the indigent whose tears he dried, but to all who have known him. Some years since, a traveller who happened to be at Clermont wished to see the country-seat where the prelate was accustomed to pass great part of the year. He applied to an ancient grand-vicar, who, since the bishop's death, had not had resolution to return to this country mansion, now deprived of its inhabitant. He consented, however, to satisfy the traveller's desire, notwithstanding the pain he expected from revisiting a spot so sadly dear to his remembrance. They went together, and the grand-vicar

* This is to be understood of the unmarried Catholic bishops. TRANSL.
shewed

shewed every thing to the stranger,
 " Here," said he, with tears in his eyes,
 " is the alley where this worthy prelate
 " took his walks with us : here is the ar-
 " bour under which he used to repose
 " while he read : this is the garden which
 " he cultivated with his own hands."
 They then entered the house, and when
 they came to the chamber in which Mas-
 fillon had breathed his last ; " This," said
 the grand-vicar, " is the place where we
 " lost him ;" and, as he spoke these
 words, he fainted away. The shade of
 Titus or Marcus Aurelius might have en-
 vied such a homage !

Maffillon has been compared with Bour-
 daloue, as often as Cicero with Demof-
 thenes, and Racine with Corneille. Pa-
 rallels of this kind, fertile topics for anti-
 theses, prove nothing more than the de-
 gree of ingenuity in him who makes them.
 We shall resign this common-place matter
 without regret, and confine ourselves to
 a single

a single reflection. When Bourdaloue appeared, the pulpit was yet barbarous; rivalling, as Massillon himself observed, the theatre in buffoonery, or the schools in dryness. That Jesuit orator was the first who gave to Religion a language worthy of her: it was solid, serious, and, above all, strictly and closely logical. If he who enters an untrodden path has many thorns to obstruct him, he also enjoys great advantages, for his advance is more marked, and his immediate celebrity greater, than those of his successors. The public, long accustomed to the reign of Bourdaloue, who had been the first object of their veneration, were long persuaded that he could have no rival, especially while Massillon was living, and Bourdaloue from his tomb no longer heard the cry of the multitude in his favour. At length, Death, which brings justice in its train, has assigned to each orator his proper place; and Envy, which had excluded

Maffillon from that which was his due, may now seat him in it without the fear of his enjoying it. We shall, however, refrain from giving him a pre-eminence which grave authorities would disallow: it is Bourdaloue's greatest glory, that the superiority of Maffillon is still disputed; but if it were to be decided by the number of readers, the advantage would be on the side of Maffillon. Bourdaloue is little read but by preachers and devotees; his rival is in the hands of all who read; and we must be permitted to say, as completing his Eulogy, that the most celebrated writer of our age and nation * is particularly assiduous in the perusal of this great orator's sermons; that Maffillon is his model for prose, as Racine is for verse; and that the *Petit Carême* is always laid on his table by the side of *Athaliab*.

* M. de Voltaire, who was living when this Eulogy was delivered.

If,

If, however, a kind of parallel were to be drawn between these two illustrious orators, we might say, with an intelligent judge, that Bourdaloue argues the best, and Massillon is the most pathetic; and that a sermon excellent in all respects would be one, of which Bourdaloue should write the first head, and Massillon the second. Perhaps a still more perfect discourse would be one in which they should not appear apart, but their talents, melted together, should as it were mutually penetrate each other, and the logician should at the same time write with pathos and sensibility.

We ought not to conceal, that all the sermons of our eloquent academician, as well as his *Petit Carême*, are accused of the fault of frequently presenting in the same page only a single idea, varied, indeed, with all the richness of expression, but, by its fundamental uniformity, somewhat dragging in its enunciation. The

same criticism has been made upon Seneca, but with more justice : that writer, solely ambitious of astonishing his reader by the profusion of wit with which he overwhelms him, becomes the more wearisome, as he seems to weary himself by a pompous display of riches, which he collects on all sides with manifest effort. Massillon, having his heart solely filled with the interest of his hearer, appears to present before him in many forms the truth he wishes to impress upon him, only through fear lest he should not engrave it deeply enough on his soul. Not only, therefore, do we pardon him these tender repetitions, but we feel obliged to him for the motive which has multiplied them : we are convinced that they proceed from one who delights in the love of his fellow-creatures, and whose overflowing sensibility requires room for expansion.

- It is surprising that the French clergy, who possessed so eminent an orator, should

not

not once have nominated him to preach in their assemblies. He never desired this honour, but left to moderate capacities and ambitious tempers a petty glory of which he had no need. He was even rarely chosen a member of the Assembly ; and readily consented, as he said, that prelates less attached than himself to residence should have recourse to this decent excuse for intermitting it. The marked indifference which his episcopal brethren seemed to display towards him, was neither intentional on their parts, nor even voluntary : it was the obscure work of some men in place, who, from motives worthy of them, secretly kept Massillon out of the view of the court, not as an intriguer, for they knew him too well to believe him one ; but as an illustrious and respected prelate, whose superiority, viewed too near, might have shone with a lustre which powerful men of inferior capacity can never bear. But what a loss to such

an auditory was a preacher such as Massillon? What could be a more interesting topic than to address the assembled princes of the church on the august duties imposed on them by their dignity; on the great examples expected from them by a whole people; on the right they may acquire from the sanctity of their character and of their lives, to speak the truth to kings, and to lay at the foot of the throne the complaint of the innocent and the oppressed? Could it be thought that Massillon was unworthy to treat so grand a subject, or was it rather feared that he would treat it with too much eloquence?

This great orator, either before or after becoming a bishop, pronounced some funeral orations, the merit of which was eclipsed by that of his sermons. If he had not that inflexibility which proclaims the truth with harshness, he had that candour which does not permit to disguise it. Even through the praises which in these discourses

discourses he grants to decorum, or perhaps to truth, the secret judgment of his own heart concerning the persons whom it was his office to celebrate, escapes from his natural frankness, and swims on the surface, as it were, in spite of himself; and it is apparent on reading them, that there are some of his heroes whose history he would rather have composed than their eulogy.

Once alone a failure of memory happened to him on preaching. Deceived by the mortification this slight accident caused him, he thought it would be much better to read than to repeat his sermons. We venture to differ from him in this point. Reading forces an orator either to renounce that free action which is the soul of the pulpit, or to render it ridiculous by an air of preparation and exaggeration which destroys its nature and truth. Massillon seems himself to have been sensible that the greatest merit

In an oratorical discourse, with regard to effect, is, that it should appear produced on the spot, without any trace of premeditation; for when he was asked, which of his sermons he thought the best, he replied, " that which I recollect the " best *."

Though by taste and duty devoted to Christian eloquence, he sometimes, by way of relaxation, exercised his faculties upon other objects. It is asserted that he left in manuscript a life of Corregio. He could not have selected for his subject a painter whose talents were more analogous to his own; for he himself was, if the expression may be allowed, the Corregio of orators. It may be added, that as Corregio had formed himself by opening a new track after Raphael and Titian,

* He might, however, mean by this answer, not that it was best because best recollected, but that it had impressed itself most upon his memory because it was the best. TRANSL.

so Massillon, who had also found out a new walk of pulpit eloquence, might have said, on comparing himself to other orators, what Corregio did on viewing the pictures of other artists,—“ I too am “ a painter.”

EULOGY OF MASSILLON

NOTE I

It has been objected to this remark, that if the orator had pronounced his exordium after the dictates of the prince's advisers, he could not have made use of the words, " Happy the king who never fought " but to conquer," &c. This criticism is very just; and Massillon must certainly have been obliged to give another turn to his exordium. But what a sublime parallel he might have made between the pious

NOTES

ON THE

EULOGY OF MASSILLON.

NOTE I.

IT has been objected to this remark, that if the orator had pronounced his exordium after the disasters of the prince's advanced age, he could not have made use of the words, "Happy the king who never fought but to conquer," &c. This criticism is very just; and Massillon must certainly have been obliged to give another turn to his exordium. But what a sublime parallel he might have made between the passed glories

glories of Lewis XIV. and his present misfortunes; and how pathetically he might have concluded by applying to the unfortunate monarch these consoling words:

“Blessed are they that mourn!”

Mad. de Coulanges, in a letter to Mad. de Sevigné, makes a very judicious reflection on the species of success which Maffillon experienced at court. “He succeeded,” says she, “at Versailles as he did at Paris; but one who sows at court often sows in an ungrateful soil; for they who are much moved with sermons are already converted, and the rest wait for grace, often without impatience: the impatience itself would be a great grace.”

NOTE II.

THE excellent answer of Lewis XIV. to a preacher who had grossly marked him out in a sermon delivered in his presence,

is well known: "I am willing to take my share in the sermon, but I do not like to have it made *at me*." It has been said that even Bourdaloue exceeded the bounds in this point; and that during the time of the king's amour with Mad. de Montespan, he ventured from the pulpit to remind the monarch of David's adultery with Bathsheba, by addressing to him the words of the prophet Nathan, "Thou art the man." It is difficult to believe that Bourdaloue should so far have carried his apostolic boldness; and still more, that his brother Jesuits should have approved it. They did not pique themselves on preaching the gospel so rudely, especially at court. This pretended anecdote has doubtless been invented in order to honour Lewis with his supposed reply: "He has done his duty, let us do ours." At least it is certain, that whatever he said, he did nothing, for he kept his mistress. The duke of Orleans, when in the plenitude

tude of his power as regent, treated with a nobler indifference a fanatical Jansenist of Amiens, who had preached against him in his village. "Why does the man trouble himself about me?" said he; "I do not belong to his parish." It was with this same clergyman that the cardinal de Noailles remonstrated on the violence of his zeal. "A little more prudence, good sir!" said the prelate to him. "My lord," answered the priest, "my catechism has long taught me that prudence is one of the *cardinal* virtues."

NOTE III.

AMONG the many strokes of eloquence, of sentiment, and even of courage, which adorn these admirable discourses, we shall select only two passages, which may afford, especially at the present time*, matter for many reflections. "The liberty, fire, which princes owe to their people, is the

* Printed in 1787.

" liberty

“ liberty of the laws. You recognize,
 “ it is true, God alone as above you ; but
 “ the laws ought to have more authority
 “ than yourself. You do not rule over
 “ slaves, but over a free and warlike na-
 “ tion, as jealous of its liberty as its fide-
 “ lity, and whose submission is the more
 “ to be relied on, as it is founded on love
 “ for its masters. Kings can do what
 “ they please with this people, because
 “ their affection and fidelity set no bounds
 “ to their obedience ; but kings should
 “ themselves limit their authority, and
 “ require from this obedience no more
 “ than the laws permit them to demand,
 “ otherwise they do not reign over their
 “ subjects, but subjugate them. It is
 “ not the sovereign, then, sire, but the
 “ law, which ought to reign : you are only
 “ its minister and first depositary.
 “ Sovereigns become less potent when they
 “ wish to be more so than the laws.
 “ They lose by attempting to gain. Every
 “ thing

“ thing which renders authority odious,
 “ enervates and lessens it.”

In another sermon, Massillon thus expresses himself: “ The sovereign is not an
 “ idol set up by the people to adore it ; he
 “ is a superintendant whom they have
 “ placed at their head for their safety and
 “ defence. He is not one of those useless
 “ deities who have eyes and see not, a
 “ tongue and speak not, hands and handle
 “ not ; he is, in scripture language, one
 “ of those gods who march before the
 “ people to guide them. It is the people
 “ who, by the divine command, have made
 “ sovereigns all that they are. Yes, sire,
 “ it was the choice of the nation which
 “ first placed the sceptre in the hands of
 “ your ancestors : the nation raised them
 “ on the military buckler, and proclaimed
 “ them kings. The kingdom afterwards
 “ became the inheritance of their successors ;
 “ but it was originally due to the free consent
 “ of their subjects. Their birth alone after-
 “ wards

“wards gave them possession of the throne;
 “but the suffrage of the public first at-
 “tached this right and prerogative to
 “their birth. In fine, as the source of
 “authority is derived from us, kings ought
 “to exercise it for us alone.”

NOTE IV.

MASSILLON had the same predecessor in the academy, and in the bishopric of Clermont—the abbé de Louvois, Camille le Tellier, who had also, like him, been deprived during the life of Lewis XIV. of the honour of the episcopacy, because he was displeasing to the Jesuits, as being nephew to le Tellier, archbishop of Rheims, whom they did not love. They represented the abbé de Louvois as a Jansenist; and the king, who did Jansenism the honour of hating and persecuting it, persisted in refusing a bishopric to a man whom the Jesuits accused. After the king's death, the regent nominated the abbé to the see of Clermont,

Clermont, but he did not live to enjoy his promotion. The regent then appointed Maffillon for his successor, as if his purpose had been to brave the prejudices of the late king, by successively nominating all whom he had rejected. Maffillon was consecrated in the chapel of the Tuileries, in presence of the young king, by cardinal Fleury, then bishop of Frejus ; who, however, disliked him both as a distinguished preacher and as an Oratorian. But the bishop of Frejus wished on this occasion to make his court to the regent, and even to the king his pupil, who had been much pleased with the *Petit-Carême*, and often spoke of it with approbation to his preceptor.

NOTE V.

A SINGULAR circumstance gave rise to these conferences. Though Lewis XV. was only nine or ten years of age when Maffillon departed for his diocese, cardinal Dubois, then all-powerful, and who

had contributed not a little to obtain him his bishopric, had given him expectations of being appointed preceptor to the dauphin; who, however, was not then born, nor in the way to be so. Doubtless, a better choice, or one which would have been more approved by the public, could not have been made. Massillon, penetrated with the duties which this respectable post would impose upon him, and ambitious to fulfil them in a manner correspondent to the idea entertained of him, is said to have turned all his studies towards this object. He neglected the sermons which he had preached with so much success at Paris, ceased to mount the pulpit even in his own cathedral, and contented himself with giving familiar and simple exhortations, almost unpremeditated, to the people of his diocese; which, though calculated for the poor, all the city crowded to hear. The cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, his metropolitan, paying him

him a visit at Clermont, mentioned his surprize that he should deprive his flock of those eloquent discourses which had gained him so much reputation: Massillon confessed to him the cause; acknowledged, like the shepherd in the fable, "the little seed of ambition" he had nourished, which the hope of doing great good seemed to him to excuse; and added, that, undeceived after the lapse of a few years, he had wished to resume his oratorical career, but that, from intermitting the habit of preaching, he had almost entirely lost his memory, and found himself unable to recollect the many sermons he had forgotten. The cardinal exhorted him at least to revise his sermons, and put them in a proper condition to appear in his lifetime, or after his death; and also to compose, for the instruction of his clergy, short discourses, which would cost him little to write and get by heart, and would add to his fame without bur-

thening his memory. Maffillon followed this advice ; and thenceforth annually preached at his synods those excellent conferences, so replenished with sentiment and devotion, which alone would suffice to immortalize him.

We have mentioned what cardinal Dubois did, and proposed doing for Maffillon. The enemies of the bishop reproached him with his complaisance towards this minister in consenting to be one of the prelates who assisted at his consecration, and in signing the attestation in favour of his life and manners, requisite for his promotion to the cardinalate. He committed this fault through gratitude : he owed his fortune to Dubois, who at least had the merit of recompensing his uncommon talents, which Lewis XIV. had neglected. The good-nature of Maffillon sometimes degenerated into a weakness, for which he condemned himself, and to which he gave way involuntarily. We should pardon this

this weakness in consideration of its motives; and should remember that the pope St. Gregory, a father of the church, who has been named *the Great*, had also the misfortune to flatter queen Brunehault, and the tyrant Phocas, the murderer of the emperor Maurice.

NOTE VI.

THE Jesuits of Clermont, perhaps in order to detect his sentiments and lay a snare for him, denounced to Massillon an Oratorian accused of preaching Jansenism. The prelate, desirous of giving a proof of his orthodoxy to these zealous and clear-sighted informers, sent for the preacher, and, in presence of two Jesuits, said to him; "I am assured, father, that you
 "preach a doctrine——"—"Yes, my
 "lord," replied the Oratorian, without giving him time to finish, "I preach
 "those truths which have made you a
 E 3 "bishop."

“ bishop.” Maffillon held his peace, and sent back the Oratorian to his pulpit, and the Jesuits to hunt out other victims.

NOTE VII.

CARDINAL FLEURY requested Maffillon to undertake the conversion of Soanen, bishop of Senez, who, on account of his appeal from the bull *Unigenitus*, had been deposed by an assembly of ten or twelve bishops, which has been called the council of Embrun, and afterwards exiled to Chaife-Dieu in Auvergne. Maffillon wrote to this prelate, and received from him an answer so firm, decided, and repulsive, that he did not venture to pursue the negotiation. This answer is printed in the Jansenist life of the bishop of Senez. The prelate bitterly complains in it of his former brethren of the Oratory, who had abandoned him after becoming bishops. But Maffillon did not attach the same

same importance with him to the opinions which had caused the misfortunes of this respectable old man. He thought it was possible to be a good Christian and a good bishop, without declaiming against the bull; that it was perhaps doing too much honour to this production, which he called "less pontifical than Jesuitical," to pay it a serious attention; and that the surest way of consigning it to oblivion was to treat it with a profound silence, respectful in appearance, contemptuous in reality.

NOTE VIII.

It was not solely the eloquence of Massillon, or the respect inspired by his virtues, that determined government to grant the succours requested by him in favor of the wretched; it was likewise through the fear, (doubtless ill-grounded,) that to discontent him might induce him to turn Jansenist. It was not thought fit

that this party should have to boast of so illustrious a defender ; and apprehensions were entertained that his example in that case would be imitated by several of his episcopal brethren. Cardinal Fleury, from this motive, treated Massillon with much regard, though he did not love him. Massillon, on his part, shewed equal respect to the minister, but through the more noble motive of thereby obtaining relief for the poor of his diocese. He would sometimes humorously say of this timid policy, reciprocally practised between the cardinal and himself, " We are mutually
 " afraid of each other, and each of us
 " very happy to have met with a pol-
 " troon." He carried so far this " pol-
 " troonery," which he frankly avowed, as not to venture to confide his seminary to his former brethren of the Oratory, because the cardinal asked the preference for others. Massillon thought he had reason to repent this weakness. " I have
 " opened

“ opened the door to ignorance,” said he,
 “ in order to have peace: I ought to
 “ have reflected, that among priests as
 “ well as people, ignorance is much more
 “ to be feared than knowledge.”

The same cardinal, who interested himself little in the display of merit, was afraid of the lustre with which Massillon would appear at Paris, were he to shew himself there. He therefore assiduously precluded every occasion which might bring the bishop of Clermont to the capital, and this was an additional reason why all the favours he requested by letter were granted him. It is much to be regretted that the editors of Massillon's works have not published these interesting letters, which, it is said, would form a considerable volume. The following extract from one of them will give an idea of the misery at that time suffered by some of the peasantry in France :

“ It

“ It is, my lord, a matter of public no-
 “ toriety, that Auvergne, a province
 “ without commerce and almost without
 “ means, is, however, of all the provinces
 “ in the kingdom, proportionally the most
 “ loaded with taxes. The council is not
 “ ignorant of this. They are raised to more
 “ than six millions (of livres), which the
 “ king would not draw from all the lands of
 “ Auvergne, were he their sole proprietor.
 “ In consequence, our country-people live
 “ in the most shocking indigence, without
 “ bed, without furniture, the greater
 “ part even in want half the year of the
 “ barley or oat-bread which is their sole
 “ nutriment, and which they are obliged
 “ to snatch from their children’s mouths
 “ in order to pay their taxes.

“ I have the grief, my lord, of hav-
 “ ing this dismal spectacle every year be-
 “ fore my eyes in my visitations. It is,
 “ my lord, a certain fact, that in all
 “ France there is not a people more ne-
 “ cessitous

“ cessitous and wretched than this. The
 “ negroes in our islands are infinitely
 “ happier; for while they labour, they,
 “ their wives and children, are fed and
 “ cloathed; whereas our peasants, the
 “ most laborious in the kingdom, are
 “ unable, with their utmost exertions, to
 “ obtain bread for themselves and their
 “ families, and pay their subsidies. If,
 “ in this province, there have been found
 “ intendants who speak a different lan-
 “ guage, they have sacrificed truth and
 “ conscience to their vile interests.

“ But, my lord, to this general and
 “ usual indigence of our province, have
 “ been joined, during the three last years,
 “ hail-storms and other causes of sterility
 “ which have completed the desolation of
 “ the poor people. The last winter, espe-
 “ cially, has been so dreadful, that if we
 “ have escaped famine, and a general
 “ mortality, which seemed inevitable, it
 “ has solely been owing to an excess and
 “ fervour

“ fervour of charity which persons of all
 “ ranks have displayed in averting these
 “ evils. The country was entirely de-
 “ ferted, and our towns could scarcely
 “ suffice to contain the innumerable mul-
 “ titude of wretches who came to seek
 “ their bread. The traders, the long
 “ robe, the clergy, all gave us succour;
 “ you yourself, my lord, influenced the
 “ royal bounty to advance us sixty thou-
 “ sand livres. It was through these aids
 “ alone that half our lands, the whole of
 “ which were destined to lie fallow from
 “ the excessive dearth of grain, were sown.
 “ The price of corn is now reduced to less
 “ than half what it was; but the poor
 “ people who, in order to procure seed,
 “ were obliged to borrow money of the
 “ king and individuals, and to buy grain
 “ at an exorbitant price, will now be
 “ obliged to sell three times as much in
 “ order to reimburse the advances made
 “ them; so that they will fall back into
 “ the

" the same gulf of wretchedness, unless
 " your Eminence should have the charity
 " to grant them this year some consider-
 " able abatement of the imposts which the
 " council are about to regulate."

A very respectable prelate now living
 affirms that the bishop of Clermont did not
 confine himself, in his letters to the car-
 dinal, to the solicitation of relief for the
 poor in his diocese, but that he ventured
 sometimes to reproach him on public
 matters. He has read a very eloquent
 and pointed letter, which the bishop wrote
 to the minister on the injustice of the war
 of 1741 ; and even a charge which he had
 drawn up in consequence, and had sent to
 the cardinal. This charge has not been
 printed in the collection of the works of
 Massillon. Probably the cardinal persuaded
 him to suppress it, which is much to be
 regretted. It would have been curious to
 see how the prudent Massillon could con-
 ciliate, in this pastoral letter, his respect
 for

for the monarchical authority, with his sentiments on the actual conduct of administration;—his love for his king, with his still greater love for humanity and justice, which appeared to him alike outraged by the war in question.

EULOGY

OF THE

ABBE' DE SAINT PIERRE.

CHARLES-IRENEUS-CASTEL DE SAINT PIERRE was born in 1658, at the castle of St. Pierre in Lower Normandy. We have no account of his early studies, nor do we regret our ignorance; since the first action by which he is known to us, is an instance of singular generosity, more interesting than the prizes which he did or did not obtain in his classes. The geometrician Varignon, who has since acquired distinction by his mathematical works, at that time led an obscure and indigent life at his native city of Caen. He frequently went
to

to the disputations at the college of that place, where he had gained the reputation; which he afterwards held very cheap, of a subtle and formidable disputant. The abbé de St. Pierre, who studied in the same college, became acquainted with Varignon, and held many disputations with him on the frivolous questions which were the sole and wretched philosophy of the time; and such a relish did he acquire for his society, that he resolved to take him to Paris, where they both were likely to meet with instruction of a superior kind. He hired a small house in the suburb of St. Jaques, where he settled himself with the geometrician his countryman. But as Varignon, who was absolutely destitute of fortune, had occasion for a fixed maintenance that he might devote himself to his favourite study, the abbé de St. Pierre, whose own income amounted only to the very moderate sum of one thousand eight hundred livres, took from it three

I

hundred

hundred, which he gave to his friend. The manner in which he made this donation greatly enhanced its value. "I do not," said he, "give you a pension, but a bond, in order that you may not be dependent upon me, but may leave me and take up your abode elsewhere, whenever you become tired of me."

The abbé, who has been charged with being deficient in sensibility, displayed, at least, as appears from this instance, a delicacy in his friendships and benefits, which, rare as it is, alone confers a title to the gratitude of the heart, though the benefits themselves command a return of services. He had even what is better than this delicacy, he had the simplicity which does not study for it; and the merit, so unusual to benefactors, of attaching no value either to his gifts, or to the noble manner in which he bestowed them. Generosity towards his friends was a real necessity which his worthy soul longed to gratify; and if he

appeared to oblige them with a sort of indifference, it was because it was indifferent to him whether he gave or received. Thus, he used to repeat with peculiar pleasure that charming anecdote of honest la Fontaine, who, being pressed for debts which he was unable to pay, made himself perfectly easy in the security one of his friends had given for him, and said, with all the simplicity and frankness of a good heart; "He has given his word for me; he must pay; I would do as much in his place*."

The abbé de St. Pierre, and Varignon, shut up in their solitude, and no longer, as at college, condemned to the study of a philosophy worse than ignorance, soon renounced the pitiful sport of scholastic sparring. As soon as their sound understandings had been opened to objects of real value, each, on his part, engaged in useful and interesting pursuits; Varignon

* See NOTE I. at the end of the article.

in geometrical studies ; St. Pierre in those relative to politics and morals. Fontenelle, their countryman and friend, sometimes passed two or three days with them ; and has himself, at the distance of more than forty years, described the pleasures he tasted in this small society, so truly deserving the name of philosophical. “ It was “ with extreme delight,” says he, “ that “ we met ; young as we were, full of the “ first ardour for knowledge, perfectly “ united, and, what we then, perhaps, “ did not enough consider as an advantage, little known.” It was thus (we may incidentally remark) that the sage Fontenelle, one of those who have enjoyed the greatest share of literary fame, spoke at sixty, while in the full enjoyment of his reputation, of the unenvied happiness of being unknown ; and thus that he recollected the sweet and peaceful obscurity of his early youth, with a regret which will not cure a single man of letters of the

dangerous ambition of meriting glory and envy *.

Though the abbé de St. Pierre had little cultivated the art of writing, yet his profound knowledge in French history, and especially his assiduous study of his native language, less, indeed, as an orator and man of taste than as a philosophical grammarian, opened to him the gates of the French Academy, where he was admitted on March 3d, 1695. As he had not the slightest pretensions to eloquence, he might have been glad to have obtained the assistance of one of his associates in composing his discourse at admission, which would not have been unexampled; but he was of opinion that duty obliged him to draw it up himself, without any aid from borrowed wit. Fontenelle, to whom he shewed it, proposed the retrenchment of certain careless phrases, and a general heightening and animation of the style.

* See NOTE II.

“ My

“ My discourse then,” said the abbé,
 “ appears to you a very middling per-
 formance : so much the better, it will
 “ be more like the author :” and he
 made no alteration. It was represented to
 him, that he ought to take a longer time to
 his task ; for he had assigned to it no more
 than four hours. “ Discourses of this
 “ kind,” he replied, “ for any public
 “ utility they are of, deserve no more
 “ than two hours : I have given four to
 “ mine, which I think very decent.”

Become member of a society the prin-
 cipal object of which is the culture of style,
 he did not on that account think himself
 obliged to bestow more care on his man-
 ner of writing. He composed many
 works, in which, satisfied with the sup-
 posed excellence of the matter, he was
 totally negligent as to the dress. He was
 not, indeed, insensible of the value of or-
 nament, or of its necessity in order to en-
 gage a number of readers ; but he thought

his talent did not lie that way ; and he was unwilling to attempt to force nature, lest the useless efforts he might make for that purpose should occupy the time consecrated to his beloved moral and political speculations. Hearing one day an amiable woman express herself with much grace on a frivolous topic ; “ What a pity,” he cried, “ she does not write what I “ think * !”

He was persuaded that an author, zealous to do good, could not too often repeat what was important ; and he too closely conformed to this principle. A person said to him, “ I find excellent “ things in your writings, but they are “ too often repeated.” He desired instances, and nothing could be more easy to be produced. “ You have then retained them in your memory,” observed the abbé ; “ this was the very reason for

* See NOTE III.

“ which

“ which I repeated them, and I did right,
 “ for otherwise you would have forgotten
 “ them.” He was contented that these
 repetitions should be laughed at, provided
 they were at the same time quoted; and
 he consoled, or rather congratulated him-
 self, on the pleasantry they excited, with
 the satisfaction of having compelled his
 readers to retain an useful truth. Utility
 was, indeed, the sole aim of his labours.
 Never any author, even among those who
 profess themselves most indifferent to fame,
 was less occupied with his own glory, or
 less susceptible of the most secret illusions
 of self-love. He did not resemble that
 devout writer, who, while he loved to
 speak of the success of his works, always
 subjoined to the applause he received,
 “ God is to be glorified for it;” which
 he thought a sufficient exercise of humi-
 lity *. The abbé de St. Pierre’s simplicity
 was less pious, but more genuine; it was

* See Note IV.

neither humility nor modesty, but pure neglect of his own interest, without even pretending to the honour of the sacrifice. He will not be accused of having augmented the number of those who talk of philosophy without practising it; and who, as he was accustomed to say in his familiar but expressive phrase, “chant the service of the convent, without observing its rules.”

Inaccessible as he was to the pleasures and vexations of vanity, the affection nearest the hearts of most men, he will perhaps be pardoned for having been little sensible to the pains occasioned by the other affections. Very different from that stoical quack, who, in the midst of his tortures, cried out, with a distorted countenance, that bodily pain was no evil, the abbé regarded it as the most real of all evils, and the only one which reason can neither blunt nor divert: he called it the only one which, in his estimation, had an *intrinsic* value,

value, while that of all others was purely *numerary*. In fine, the desire of seeing his fellow-creatures happy, and contributing by all his feeble efforts to make them so, was so predominant in his soul, that it almost extinguished all other feelings. If he underwent the reproach of never having tenderly loved a single person, it was because he cherished all men without distinction. He excepted, or rather he forgot, no one but himself; and they who accused his benevolence of being cold and methodical, at least could not tax it with being solitary and personal. He further thought, that the charity of a wise man, with respect to others, ought not to be limited to their relief under suffering, but ought to be extended to that indulgence which they so often require for their faults, their errors, and their absurdities; that if one of the most melancholy effects of old age is to inculcate from day to day a worse opinion of mankind, experience

ought at the same time to teach compassion for their weaknesses ; and that the motto of the virtuous man is comprised in these two words, " give and forgive."

Little solicitous to please his readers, whom he thought sufficiently repaid by the utility of his works, he was scarcely more so to render himself agreeable to the societies into which he was admitted. He brought to them few charms or resources for conversation, and was endured rather than sought after. Perceiving once that he was a supernumerary in one of those brilliant circles which we call, sometimes improperly, good company ; " I perceive," said he, " that you are tired of me, and I am sorry for it ; but I take great pleasure in hearing you, and I request you to permit me still to enjoy it."

If he contributed a small share to social intercourse, it was neither through sterility nor contempt, but through a good-natured

natured principle seldom met with, the fear of fatiguing his auditors. " When " I write," he would say, " no one is " forced to read me; but they whom I " should force to hear me would constrain themselves to appear at least to " attend, and that is an effort I wish to " spare them as much as I can." Not flattering himself with being able to do more, he avoided giving displeasure; and not only waited to speak till he was invited, but never spoke except on the topics with which he was best acquainted. Besides his political information, which was very extensive, his memory was stored with many facts and anecdotes, which he told well, though with great simplicity, and especially with the most exact truth; for he would have scrupled to alter the least circumstance, though for the sake of making his story more pleasant or interesting. " No one is obliged to be amusing," he would say; " but he is, not
" to

“ to deceive.” They who had the patience and justice to listen to him did not repent their complaisance, and were often unexpectedly repaid for any effort it might have cost them. A very sensible woman having held a long conference with him on serious matters, received a satisfaction from it that she could not forbear warmly expressing. “ I am a bad instrument,” returned the modest philosopher, “ on “ which you have played skilfully.”

He loved and sought the society of women, although, through modesty as well as principle, he was far from aiming at any conquests over them. He found them possessed of more patience than the men in enduring him, and more indulgence for the importunity of his visits. Perhaps, also, that radical and excusable inclination always felt for the sex, acted upon him without his being sensible of it, and deceived him as to the motives of the preference he gave them.

A place

A place at court which he ventured to accept *, obliged him sometimes to make it his residence. His friends were convinced that he could not accommodate himself to such an abode ; but they were mistaken. Without being discontented with the tranquil life he had led in what he termed his *cot* of the suburb of St. Jaques, he found somewhat more relish in a life of a little dissipation. It made an addition to his enjoyments ; at least he thought so, and that was sufficient. We may nevertheless admit, that, by thus unnecessarily changing place, he exposed himself too lightly to the hazard of repentance. Could he be ignorant, that every wise man who finds his lot easy and tranquil, though not delightful, ought to think himself better treated by fortune than the human condition gave him reason to expect ? Our sage, therefore, for a moment ceased to be one, when he shewed a dis-

* See NOTE V.

trust of that destiny which had given him no cause to complain, and sported with his happiness in the hope of augmenting it.

We should exceed the limits of an eulogy, were we to copy the mere list of the writings of the abbé de St. Pierre, whose works, collected, form from twenty-five to thirty volumes. These writings, it must be confessed, were little read at the time of publication, and are now less so. Every circumstance has concurred to throw them into discredit: with respect to the matter; ideas sometimes singular, sometimes impracticable, sometimes trifling; and truths which, though not common at the time he wrote, are now become trite and threadbare:—with respect to the manner, still fewer attractions; prolixity, want of method, negligence of style, and even a peculiarity of spelling which alone would render the perusal irksome. But that passion for the public good

good which every where inspires the author, pleads in his favour to well-disposed minds. Sometimes even this noble passion sheds energy and warmth on his style; and if his pen is never elegant, there are passages in his works which prove that eloquence may proceed from the soul alone. Foreigners, who feel less than ourselves the defects of the writer, and hence more fairly appreciate the merit of the citizen and the sage, entertain the highest esteem for him, and reproach us for our injustice towards him. The French tongue is indebted to him for one precious word, that of *bienfaisance*, (beneficence,) the invention of which is justly due to a man who so well practised the virtue expressed by it *. He was also the author of another term, which did not at first equally succeed, as being less interesting to humanity, but which begins to come into favour, as very happily express-

* See NOTE VI.

ing

ing one of the principal foibles of man, especially of the French nation ; it is the word *gloriole*, so well adapted to that childish vanity, which, owing its birth and nurture to the most futile objects, lives only upon the lightest fume, continually prompt to evaporate.

Occupied in all his writings in combating freely, though without ill-humour, every thing injurious to that public good which was the sole object of his wishes, our philosopher declared himself the determined enemy of war, of excessive taxes, and the eternal vexations inflicted by force upon weakness. He perpetually exhorts princes to prefer to the vain splendour of conquest, that solid applause which is obtained by the virtues useful to mankind ; “ and which,” says he, “ compared to “ the fatal lustre of arms, is like a state “ of sound uninterrupted health, compared to the noxious intoxication of “ violent pleasures.” He was, however, persuaded,

persuaded, notwithstanding his love for peace, that the civil wars of the Romans, with all their horrors, had been less destructive than the tyranny of a Tiberius or a Nero ; since these wars at least inspired men's minds with an energy which tyranny annihilates ; and since those injuries are most felt which cannot be retaliated.

One day, in his presence, a person made use of that phrase so often applied by servility to sovereigns unworthy of the throne, that kings are gods upon earth : " I know " not," he replied, " whether such beings " as Caligula and Domitian were gods ; " I only know that they were not men."

On another occasion, mention was made before him of those actions of clemency and humanity which have sometimes escaped from tyrants, and which they have, as it were, permitted themselves to practise inconsequentially. " I doubt not," said he, " that all the good they did was " highly celebrated during their lives ;

" it is only a pity that their people knew
 " so little of it." But the more he de-
 tested oppressive and tyrannic power, the
 more he respected lawful authority en-
 lightened by wisdom and justice. He
 often repeated that excellent maxim of
 Francis the First—that " sovereigns com-
 " mand the people, and laws the sove-
 " reigns." He particularly delighted to
 quote these admirable words prefixed to
 one of the edicts of Theodosius, as the
 motto of all virtuous and equitable mo-
 narchs: " It is a confession worthy of the
 " majesty of the prince, to declare him-
 " self bound by the laws, so much does
 " our authority depend upon theirs; and,
 " in reality, to submit sovereignty to the
 " laws, is greater than the sovereignty it-
 " self: by the present edict, therefore, as
 " an oracle, we indicate to others what
 " we consider as not permitted to our-
 " selves."

In

In proportion to the horror which the abbé de St. Pierre entertained of adulation lavished upon wicked power, he was indulgent to the praise of humane and beneficent princes ; especially of those who, still young, with all the ingenuousness of new and unostentatious virtue, and no less hating flatterers than sensible to the love of their people, may be encouraged by the expression of that love to continue to deserve it. “ But whatever pleasure,” said he, “ I may receive from the praises of “ good princes, either in books, where “ I always a little suspect their truth, or “ in their courts, where I suspect them “ still more, I am never satisfied till I hear “ them repeated in the villages *.”

That of his works for which he bore the greatest affection, was his “ Plan of a “ perpetual Peace” between all monarchs, and of a kind of senate of Europe formed for the conservation of that peace, which

* See NOTE VII.

he named "the European Diet." This plan of the peace and diet he sent to cardinal Fleury, with five preliminary articles. "You have forgotten," replied the cardinal, "one essential article, which is, to send a company of missionaries in order to dispose the hearts of the contracting princes in favour of this peace and diet." A Dutch shopkeeper made perhaps a better answer to the abbé, by taking for his sign a burying-ground, with the inscription, "perpetual peace." Yet a writer distinguished for his eloquence* attempted some years since to revive this project, by decorating it with all the splendour of his style. The work, however, produced little more effect in this dazzling dress than it had done in the modest garb of its first author†. "Nothing is beautiful but the truth;" and the misfortune of these metaphysical projects for the

* Jean Jaques Rousseau.

† See NOTE VIII.

good of the people is, that they suppose all princes to be equitable or moderate; which is, to suppose in men of uncontrolled power, and filled with the consciousness of that power, often unenlightened, and always beset with flattery and falsehood, those dispositions which legal restraint and the fear of censure so seldom produce even in simple individuals. Whoever, in forming schemes for the good of mankind, does not take into his calculation human passions and vices, only fills his imagination with a pleasing chimera. For this reason, a minister of refined understanding used to call the abbé de St. Pierre's projects, the dreams of a worthy man. Would to God, however, that they who govern were sometimes to dream like him! One of these dreams, for instance, which would well deserve to be realized, is the disinterestedness of men in place—a subject of his perpetual exhortations.

Always in earnest, but sometimes incautious in his projects and views, he wrote against the celibacy of the priesthood ; and how far soever we may be from approving his assertions on this head, we owe it to his memory to display at least the purity of his intentions. He was apprehensive that this law, well-meant as it might have been, had caused some of those who were subjected to its restrictions, and who, " after all," said he, " were men," to supply by an illicit commerce the privation of a lawful union. He especially thought it hard upon the country clergy, usually without society to sweeten their toils, that they should be debarred such a comfort. We shall not examine how far he himself extended the strictness of his morals in this delicate point ; at least he affirmed that he had always respected the conjugal tie. " I have," said he, " very
 " exactly observed all the precepts of the
 " decalogue, particularly the last ; I have
 " never

“ never taken the ox, the ass, the wife,
 “ nor even the handmaid, of my neigh-
 “ bour.”

If his profession did not permit him to enjoy the sweets of marriage, in recompense he practised a rule which he often inculcated, that they to whom this engagement is interdicted should, as good citizens, take upon themselves the education and support of some poor or forsaken children, especially of those who, left orphans from their birth, have no other resource but public charity. He interested himself in the nurture of some children of this class; but in their education he gave nothing to vanity or opinion, and consulted only the solid advantage of these unfortunate objects. He would not have them taught the languages, dancing, music, or any of those accomplishments which may be termed the luxury of education; but he made them learn some useful trade that might secure them against want. Even

among these, he chose such occupations as, being of indispensable necessity, must ever subsist, and therefore cannot fail to afford a subsistence to those who follow them. He would on no account put any of his adopted children to one of those trades depending on fashion or caprice, the annihilation of which he foresaw from the calculations he was incessantly making; for the good abbé had calculated the epoch at which every prejudice, error, or folly, among mankind, was to cease; and a single instance will serve to give an idea of the certainty of his speculations. He did not hesitate to predict, that a time would arrive when, according to his own words, "the simplest Capuchin would know as much as the shrewdest Jesuit."

He regretted only that this happy period would be very slow in coming, in consequence of the baneful causes conspiring to retard it. Casting his eyes with sorrow
over

over the multitude of ages which, from the first existence of man, have been lost to the cultivation of the human understanding, he imputed this misfortune principally to the despotism under which so many nations have groaned, and which he regarded as the natural, the necessary, and vigilant foe of knowledge and illumination. In fact, if a slave chained up in darkness is suffered to see the light, his first motion will be to look upon his fetters, and his next, to discover where they may be broken. The abbé added, that if some tyrants through vanity had shewn a little favour to the sciences, it was on the condition that they should not descend to the people; and Dionysius of Syracuse, bestowing fugitive caresses upon some travelling philosophers, did not appear to him more attractive than that Chartreux, which a stranger admired for the great beauty of its situation; "yes," said one of the monks, "for passengers."

Our

Our philosopher gave an additional reason for the slowness with which nations become enlightened: it was, that the bulk of mankind have no opinions of their own, but follow, like sheep, received prejudices; and, moreover, that they who are formed to think for themselves seldom have the courage to do so. "Wise men," said he, "reluctantly and through weakness plodding on in the beaten path, comply, even while they despise them, with the maxims of the multitude, which afterwards gain strength from their example, and receive back from them the authority which they recognized." He affirmed, that this pusillanimous fear of shocking vulgar notions had spread to those topics on which individuals have the most acknowledged right to think for themselves, such as the objects of literature and taste*. He main-

* See NOTE IX.

tained,

tained, that the apprehension of making enemies, or at least of receiving insults, had compelled thousands of writers to pay homage to prejudices which they knew to be hurtful to the cause of letters; superstitiously to adore what they ought to have honoured indeed, but with discernment; prudentially to applaud productions of mediocrity which had acquired the public protection; in fine, to employ all the ingenuity in avoiding to speak their real thoughts, which they should have employed in speaking them. While he lamented this weakness, the abbé might have suggested its remedy: this would be, that every man of letters should leave behind him a *last testament*, in which he should freely explain himself concerning the works, opinions, and persons, which his conscience should reproach him with having flattered; and should ask pardon of the age for treating it with only a posthumous sincerity.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding the union of so many causes to keep men in ignorance, the abbé was, however, convinced that a progress, greater or less, was actually making towards improvement, on all subjects, and in all conditions. He feared not to announce to orators and poets a coming age of severity and reason, in which little account would be made of eloquence, and still less of poetry, and those works would be lightly esteemed which should not join the utility of instruction to the charms of style. Once there was read in his presence one of those compositions which have no merit but the pleasure they afford, and which, therefore, however applauded in our time, are, according to his system, to obtain little favour from our great-grandchildren. As he seemed to listen to it much more coldly than the rest of the audience, and even to bestow an occasional smile on it, he was asked what he thought of the work? "Why," said he, "it is *still* very fine."

As oratory had so few charms in his eyes, it is no wonder that the most admired sermons were in his estimation mere declamations, in which, according to him, the preacher's smallest object was to convert his hearers. Improving, therefore, upon the idea in Nicole's treatise "On the method of profiting by bad Sermons," and including all preachers in his reforms, he drew up a scheme, intitled, "A Plan for rendering Sermons useful *." This title, really more piquant from its simplicity than if the author had meant a jest, was not thought smart enough by one of those who amuse themselves with drawing up titles for books; and he changed the innocent proposal of the abbé de St. Pierre into "A Scheme for rendering useful, Preachers, Physicians, Farmers of the Revenue, Monks, Journals, and Horse-Chesnuds."

* See Note X.

The French Academy, which the abbé regarded as a kind of lesser adoptive country, had a share in the patriotic author's plans of reform. He wished that our admission-harangues, which were in his time condemned to the exclusive topic of cold panegyric, should be discourses full of elevation and energy, in which reason should be combined with eloquence, simplicity with good taste, dignity with fervour, and noble praises with useful truths: he wished that the subjects of our prizes of eloquence should no longer be, what they were during almost a century, texts of sermons; but that they should be consecrated to the eulogy of those celebrated characters who have done honour to the nation by their abilities and virtues; and that these eulogies should serve as the frame or pretext for important lessons, suggested by the successes, or even the failures, of these great men. This project of the abbé has not been a *dream* like the

the rest. He might say to his academical associates, were he to return among them, "Of all my fellow-citizens, you alone have deigned to hear me;" and he would felicitate himself on seeing his views so happily fulfilled by the eloquent panegyrist of Dagueffeau, Sully, and Descartes, and by his worthy successors *.

A declared enemy to all those errors which debase and diminish the human species, the Mussulman religion was the object of his particular aversion; less on account of its absurdity than the declared support it affords to ignorance, and all the modes of brutalizing its people. At the same time he lamented, with all the candour of his character, that fatal blindness which has so often injured Christianity, by inspiring an indiscreet or barbarous zeal to serve or avenge it. Feeling equal horror and contempt for fanatical persecu-

* See NOTE XI.

tors, he proposed at the same time to shut them up as madmen, and to expose them on the stage as objects of ridicule. He thought that, in theological controversies, sometimes so futile, and always so dangerous, which too often disturb the church and the state, a wise government ought strictly to close the mouths of those who excite or continue them. The exhortation of the abbé (an useless exhortation indeed!) to these turbulent disputants, was comprized in two words—"keep silence *."

If

* The good abbé, in this instance, seems to have forgotten both his philosophy and his equity. Why should persons be debarred from engaging in controversies on topics which *they* think important, because another may think them futile? From the theory of the Christian religion, theological truths must be deemed the most important of all; and a true philosopher, whatever be his own opinion, will not conceive himself entitled to dictate to others what they are or are not to think matters of consequence.

If among so many estimable designs of this zealous philosopher, some notions justly reprehensible occur, and others which suppose a degree of perfection in human nature that probably it will never attain; his errors and mistakes may teach those who resemble him, that in vain shall the virtuous man aspire to be an instrument of good, if he have not that enlightened patience which knows how to wait for the proper moment; and that, with the most laudable intentions, a person may in two ways injure the cause of truth, either by substituting error for it, or by presenting it before its season. It belongs to the

sequence. The abbé's excuse must be, that living in a country where full and free discussion on all subjects which authority had decided upon was prohibited, he saw no good that could arise from such partial disputation as was permitted: nor had he learned from experience, that no sort of literary contention is dangerous to the public peace, where power does not make itself a party. TRANSL.

wife to judge the abbé de St. Pierre on both these heads ; but it belongs also to the good to pardon those faults into which he might be drawn by his love for mankind. Humanity, whose claims he knew, and whose rights he defended, may say to him, if the application be permitted, what the God of mercy said to the female sinner : “ Thy sins, though many, are forgiven, because thou hast loved much.” May Religion, to which humanity is so precious, set her seal to this indulgence ! may she ratify, with respect to our associate, that kind of motto which he has placed at the end of most of his works, “ Paradise
“ to the beneficent.”

His principles of government, good or bad, had rendered him adverse to those adopted by Lewis XIV. He had the imprudent frankness to express his sentiments concerning them, not with malignity, of which he was incapable, but perhaps with too little reserve, in a work published
three

three or four years after that king's death. He forgot, that truth, which ought only to speak in respectful terms to princes when living, should also observe a prudential regard towards the ashes of a prince just departed. The author's unreserved freedom raised a violent storm against him. An academician whom Lewis XIV. had exiled and disgraced*, and who, therefore, had no reason to fear the reproach of excess of gratitude towards that monarch, thought he performed an act of generosity, of decency, or of justice, in avenging the memory of a king, whose rigour to himself he seemed to forget. He brought the book to the academy, shuddered as he read the passage in which the manes of the defunct sovereign were attacked, communicated his emotion to his associates, and insisted on the punishment of the author. The abbé wrote to

* Cardinal de Polignac.

the society, and asked permission to defend himself before he was condemned. His request was rejected by a great majority, on the ground, that if he should come for the purpose of retracting, his retraction would be secret, and confined within the limits of the society, whereas his offence had been public. Doubtless, it would not have been decent in the Academy, after having bestowed so much incense on Lewis XIV. while living, to refuse justice to his shade, and to bury in the same tomb their gratitude and eulogies. But it also apparently would have been just to join to the merited expressions of homage to their king, the regards claimed by a fellow-member of distinguished virtue and integrity, and to have heard from his own mouth his apology, his sorrow, or his condemnation. This was not the opinion that then prevailed. Of twenty-four members who composed the assembly, four only gave their voices for the hear-

ing of the culprit. These were, the virtuous Sacy, the philosophers la Motte and Fontenelle, and the respectable abbé Fleury, who, having with so much truth written ecclesiastical history, knew that councils never refused to hear heretics, and did not think himself bound to shew a more punctilious respect for the glory of the king, than the church had shewn for the glory of God. The favour, or the justice, requested by the abbé de St. Pierre being thus refused him, a ballot was taken to determine his punishment ; and all the balls, one excepted, concurred for exclusion from the academical sittings. This one was given by Fontenelle, who, always prudent and cautious in his writings and conversation, but firm and decided in his actions, thought it his duty to protest, at least tacitly, against a rigour which appeared to him precipitate. M. de Sacy, an intimate of the abbé de St. Pierre, was accused of this secret protestation ; which

circumstance obliged Fontenelle to declare himself the guilty person; and no one dared to rise up against a crime which several reproached themselves with not having dared to commit. Fontenelle has more than once said, with his philosophical moderation, that he was *a little surprised* not to have had a single accomplice on this occasion. But the animosity against the abbé was at that time so great, and was headed by men so formidable, that some indulgence may seem due to the want of courage among his friends. They who would most rigorously refuse this indulgence are, perhaps, the persons who themselves would most need it in similar circumstances.

As the abbé de St. Pierre had been solely excluded from our meetings, without being declared to have forfeited his place, his chair at the Academy remained empty during the rest of his life. Uncorrected by this disgrace, perhaps even
feeling

feeling himself more free in consequence of it, he continued to speak and write with the same liberty concerning the present and past administration. The government suffered him to go on, in the hope that he would not be read; and the homeliness of his style served as a passport to the boldness of his ideas.

That sound and tranquil reason which had ever regulated his conduct, accompanied him to the tomb. He died at the age of eighty-five, on April 29, 1743, full of confidence in the Supreme Being, and with the calmness of a man who had faithfully accomplished the great law of the gospel—love to God and to his fellow-creatures. On being exhorted, upon the eve of his decease, to make an address to the by-standers, he answered, as Patru had done in his last moments—"A dying man has little to say, when he does not speak either from weakness or vanity*."

* See NOTE XII.

NOTES
ON THE
EULOGY OF THE
ABBE DE SAINT PIERRE.

NOTE I.

THE friend of la Fontaine here alluded to was M. de Maucroix, canon of Rheims. For the honour of letters, this instance of simple and honest confidence among its votaries does not stand alone. Menage relates, that Costar, finding himself distressed for money at the eve of the decision of a law-suit on which the whole of his little property depended, wrote to him in these words: " If I lose my suit, I
" give you notice that I shall be ruined,
" and that you must reckon upon having
" me

“ me to maintain for the remainder of my
 “ life.” Happy the man who deserves to
 receive such a letter from a friend in mis-
 fortune !

NOTE II.

To the society composed of Fontenelle,
 the abbé de St. Pierre, and Varignon, was
 sometimes added a fourth man of letters,
 also of the province of Normandy, the
 abbé de Vertot. Carried away in his
 youth by the fever of devotion, he had
 begun with turning Capuchin; afterwards,
 released from his vows, he became a mem-
 ber of the Academy of Belles-Lettres, and
 one of our most esteemed historians.
 “ We four,” says Fontenelle, “ spoke a
 “ large share of the different languages of
 “ the republic of letters, and the subjects
 “ of this little society were dispersed into
 “ all the academies.”

NOTE III.

A WOMAN whom he often visited possessed in a superior degree the talent of speaking with grace and imagination, provided she were suffered to speak alone, and for a long time together; but she lost her excellence as soon as the monologue was converted into a dialogue. The abbé de St. Pierre was asked what he thought of her? "She appears to me," said he, "to dance well, but not to know how to walk." He was little better satisfied with our books than with our conversation: most of those he read seemed to him, to use his own expression, "a flimsy stuff, elegantly and slightly embroidered. "In mine," he added, "the stuff is good and stout, but it wants the embroidery."

NOTE IV.

ON this subject we may quote a passage in one of Mad. de Sevigné's letters. After having given a detail of a conversation between Lewis XIV. and the Jansenist Arnaud d'Andilly, father of M. de Pomponne, one of that king's ministers, she adds ; " The king has told this good old
 " man to come often and see him, as a
 " man illustrious on all accounts. He
 " has spoken a whole day in admiration
 " of him. As to M. d'Andilly, he is
 " transported, and cries from time to
 " time, feeling the need he has of it,
 " I must humble myself." Philosophy takes pleasure in remarking these little escapes of self-love, which are, in fact, very excusable, but are pleasantly masked under the language of Christian piety.

NOTE V.

THIS place was that of first almoner to the duchess of Orleans, mother to the regent. He called it "a simple benefice," probably because he had little to do with its functions. His post, however, obliged him sometimes through decorum to shew himself at Versailles. Though his visits there were neither long nor frequent, a prelate who met him one day in the gallery, thinking to be very smart upon him, cried, "What an abode for a philosopher!" "Think you," he replied, "that it is more suitable to a bishop?" This retort resembles the well-known answer of the poet Piron to the priest Defontaines, notorious for his immorality, who, on seeing the poet one day magnificently habited, exclaimed, "What a dress for such a man!" Piron replied, "What a man for such a dress!"

NOTE VI.

It is said that the word *bienfaisance* is found in writers much more ancient than the abbé de St. Pierre; but it had remained buried with them; and the abbé may be regarded as its true creator, having brought it again to life, and naturalized it. The abbé d'Olivet, a great enemy to all innovations, could not endure this word, and very seriously reproached a young man of genius, the abbé de Lille, for having used it in the title of an ode written for the Academy's prize. He might have pardoned the word in favour of the thing.

NOTE VII.

OUR academisian, who so openly declared himself against war and excessive taxes, was not less the avowed enemy of religious intolerance, of the persecution
which

which is its consequence, and of useless expences paid for out of the substance and tears of the people. He looked upon arbitrary power, and its accompanying evils, as the greatest disease of a government. Among the weak or ferocious tyrants who have borne the name of kings or emperors, he associated to the Neros and Domitians of antiquity, Lewis XI. Charles IX. and Philip II. In general, though not disposed to think ill of mankind, he had little prepossession in favour of princes. He thought that man was good by nature, but that nature was depraved by education in the greater number of sovereigns. If he too highly respected legitimate authority to bestow on kings the gross and injurious epithet which Homer affixes to them, δημοβόρος βασιλεύς ("people-devouring king"); he was, however, reserved in granting them those praises which are so often lavished upon them, and which, according to him, generally

nerally served only "to encourage power-
ful wickedness."

Notwithstanding the severity of his philosophical judgments on monarchs, equally remote from satire as from flattery, he knew how to make exceptions in favour of the small number of princes who have merited them. He rendered to all, dead as well as living, what he thought their due, and was able to distinguish knowledge and abilities in them as in the rest of mankind. He had seen the first years of the celebrated monarch who has since acted so great a part in Europe; and he said to a philosopher, just returned from "England, and going to Prussia, "You
"have been seeing a nation much superior
"to its king; you are going to see a
"king much superior to his nation."
But at the same time he appreciated with the most rigorous freedom those sovereigns who appeared to him to have violated his severe maxims concerning the sacred duties

ties imposed by a throne. Lewis XIV. was one of those whom he most accused of failure in these duties; whence he shewed little favour to the memory of that prince, though he had been obliged, as he said, to praise him *through etiquette* in his admission-discourse. His opinion of Lewis XIV. is especially displayed in his "Political Annals," where he exposes in detail, and almost with bitterness, all the evils which he thought *Lewis the Great* had brought upon his people. Yet, loudly as the abbé declared himself against the vices and errors of this king, he at the same time justified him respecting some faults of which he was accused, but which appeared in a different light to him. For example; he by no means blamed the serious air of this prince, which others termed *royal sullenness*; he thought this haughtiness of demeanour necessary to a king of the French, in order to make himself respected by so frivolous a nation.

One

One of the most estimable works of the abbé de St. Pierre relates to the difference between the *great man*, and the *illustrious man*. He applies the epithet *illustrious* to one who has only performed actions of splendour; and that of *great*, to one who has distinguished himself by extraordinary acts of virtue, or has rendered great services to humanity. At the head of his great men are placed Epaminondas, Scipio, and Descartes; of whom he prefers Epaminondas to Scipio, and Descartes to Epaminondas, taking for granted what was then supposed, that this philosopher had taught nothing but truths. He condemns the death of Cato, not for the bad reason given by so many doctors, that it was an act of cowardice, but because it was not the most advantageous thing he could have done for the republic. He also blames Fenelon for having, as he thinks, represented his Telemachus as a young man "whose only passion is glory." For

this criticism he might, upon his principles, have given a much better reason than "that a man cannot always subsist
"on a single taste."

The love of war, said our philosophical academician, finds but too much encouragement in the hearts of ambitious princes, for this cruel, but cogent reason; that if they are successful in their enterprises, the advantage and glory are theirs; but if their arms are unfortunate, their people are almost the sole sufferers: "And what," added he, "are the
"people, in the eyes of most rulers?
"True it is, that the multitude themselves stupidly favour the barbarous
"pride of warlike princes, by lavishing
"their admiration on laurels dyed with
"blood and tears, while they scarcely
"notice beneficence and justice in their
"sovereigns." For this too the abbé gave a reason, which was, that "the
"people, sharing with their kings in the
"dangers

" dangers of war, and often undergoing
 " them alone, conceive that they are
 " sharers in the glory ; whereas the glory
 " of a just prince being purely his own,
 " less interests the vanity of a nation,
 " though it so much more contributes to
 " its happiness."

NOTE VIII.

THE abbé was not far from recognising
 himself the insufficiency of this diet, his
 proposed remedy against human passions.
 He sometimes used to say, speaking of
 schemes that ended in nothing, " as fruit-
 " less as a council : " could he then rely
 more upon his European diet than upon
 these diets of Christendom, and expect
 more good from a senate of monarchs than
 from a synod of priests ? But notwith-
 standing the little success he hoped from
 his zeal, he thought himself obliged to
 lay before the public, views which appeared
 to him useful, at the hazard of never see-

ing them executed. He was persuaded that every virtuous and enlightened man who submits to become a member of any species of government, whether popular, monarchical, or even despotic, owes to his fellow-freemen or fellow-slaves the aid at least of his knowledge, if he can give none more efficacious; and that his country, whether natural or adoptive, has a claim upon him for all the good he can do it. He would not have imitated that philosopher, too prejudiced an enemy of monarchy, who being entrusted, in a dictionary of morality, with drawing up the article *Citizen*, cut it off with these two words, "*Citizen—see Republic.*"

He was by no means an approver of the three maxims so much extolled by old monks, as the means of securing their quiet and happiness;—"to let the world go on as it pleased; always to speak well of his reverence the prior; and to do one's duty in a middling way:"—yet
he

he agreed in the excellent policy and profound philosophy of the third precept: "*In a middling way!*" he observed; "an admirable rule for those who prefer their own ease to the public good, and who, having learned by experience all the malice of mankind, have concluded from it, that we should fulfil our duties neither ill enough to deserve blame, nor well enough to excite envy."

He had the same opinion concerning the saying of an ancient, that "two laws govern the world, that of the strongest, and that of the most crafty."—"I have," said he, "but too well experienced the truth of this melancholy assertion; but, were I to live ages, I could never bring myself to acquiesce in it; and I cannot habituate myself to see nothing in this wretched world but tyrants and slaves, cheats and dupes."

Though the abbé de St. Pierre's projects for the advantage of humanity proved in general only waking dreams, yet one of his works may be distinguished for its good effects, which was, his " Memorial on the " establishment of a proportional Taille." This piece greatly contributed at least to alleviate, if not entirely to abolish, the tyranny of arbitrary taxation in France. On this important topic the author speaks like a true statesman.

NOTE IX.

THE blind superstition for antiquity exhibited by so many writers, had, according to the abbé, no other source in the greater part of them, than the fear of shocking received opinions, by a refusal not to pay them due honour, but blindly to worship them. To justify his assertions concerning this idolatry, he used to relate the story of a painter who, in presence of several masters in the profession, severely criticized

pulpit orators to preach up nothing but his favourite virtue of *beneficence*. In general, he was of opinion that the most useful establishments had occasion for reform; and he compared them to clocks, which from time to time require cleaning and re-mounting. In his works may be also found his projects for reducing religion to what he called *the essential*, that is, to morality; for suppressing almost all the festivals, the number of which he considered as the nutriment of vice and idleness among the common people; and for allowing the people the liberty of working even on Sundays, “ after they had rendered to the Supreme Being the particular worship which he had thought proper to reserve for himself on that holy day.”

It is impossible not to applaud all that the abbé de St. Pierre says against hasty monastic vows, and against the abuse then permitted, of suffering them to be taken

at

at the age of sixteen. He professed himself highly pleased with an expression of Segrais, who termed the rage for turning monk, "the smallpox of the mind;"—"especially," said the abbé, "at this "rage was, in my youth, the disease of "almost all boys on leaving college."—"I myself," he added, "was attacked at "seventeen with this religious smallpox, "I presented myself before the father- "prior of the Reformed Premonstratensians of Ardennes, near Caen; but, "*happily for those who shall profit by my "works,* he doubted whether my health "would permit me to sing long enough "in the choir; and sent me to consult "an old physician of the castle of Caen, "who told me that my constitution was "too delicate. I have, therefore, had "this disorder; but it was only a *chicken-pox.*" On this subject he relates the shocking history of the abbé de Vateville, who, having had the misfortune of becoming

ing a Capuchin at seventeen, and afterwards a Carthusian, grew wearied of his cloyster, fled, killed three men, married a nun, turned Mahometan; then, to regain the favour of the Catholic church, betrayed the sultan, his benefactor, by delivering to the Austrians a detachment under his command, in a war between the emperor Leopold and the Turks. This monastic fervour, so transitory and so fatal in its consequences, took possession of the abbé de Vateville after he had heard a sermon on hell, which the preacher had painted in the most horrible colours: a matter for reflection on the terrible effects which certain religious objects may produce on weak and susceptible minds.

NOTE XL.

HE by no means approved the plan of institution of the French Academy, of which, in his opinion, cardinal Richelieu had made "an instrument of flattery and
"slavery."

"slavery." He wished that we should have avoided even all pretext for the bitter reproach brought against us by some caustic writers, "of having infected all Europe with the incense we have burned before our idols *." He wished that our academical harangues should cease to be "repertories of compliments," and "insipid collections of formularies;" and should not resemble, according to Descartes' comparison, those solemn masses, in which the officiant, after having perfumed the whole assembly with his incense, concludes with being perfumed in his turn. It was his particular desire that these discourses should skilfully and covertly attack all those prejudices which oppose the progress of light, and which it might not be safe directly to confront; that by this silent and continued warfare, men's

* The words of *le Vassor*, in his history of Lewis XIII.

minds might be prepared to throw off the yoke of prejudice; that the subjects of our prizes of eloquence should be consecrated to the eulogy of the eminent men of the nation; that the assemblies appointed to distribute these prizes should be a kind of states-general of literature, to which the most distinguished persons of every class should be invited; and that the monarch himself should deign to honour them with his presence. In a word, the abbé wished the French Academy to take for its motto this sentence of Pliny: “ If we cannot do things worthy of being recorded, let us at least write what is worthy of being read.”

His work on the reform of the Academy calls to mind another of his writings, intitled, “ A Plan for rendering Dukes and Peers useful.” This title, which would have been a satire in the mouth of any other author, was in him only the plain and simple expression of his sentiments.

sentiments. He had other "projects for
 "rendering useful" parliamentary re-
 monstrances, bad books, romances, and
 catechisms ;

Schemes lost in empty air as soon as formed.

However desirous he was of seeing some
 of his patriotic and benevolent views ac-
 complished, he so little expected to enjoy
 this happiness, that he expressed some sa-
 tisfaction when jocularly told, that some
 of his projects would be executed in five
 or six centuries. On this occasion he
 used to repeat the common proverb,
 "better late than never."

NOTE XII.

VOLTAIRE relates, that having asked
 the abbé de St. Pierre, a few days before
 his death, what he thought of his ap-
 proaching end? He replied, "As of a
 "journey into the country." The Aca-
 demy, after his death, treated him with
 some-

somewhat more indulgence than they had done his fellow in misfortune, the abbé Furetiere. With respect to the latter, it had been determined that the Academy in a body should not perform a funeral service for him, as usual for a deceased member, but that each member should pray for his soul in private. A service was decreed for the abbé de St. Pierre, either by way of reparation for a suspension which the modern Academy did not approve, or because the fault for which he had undergone twenty years' proscription did not concern any of his brethren; or, finally, (for why should it be supposed that the best reason was overlooked,) because so virtuous a citizen did not deserve to be deprived of honours which are granted to so many men unworthy of them. But if he received before God and the altar those honours which were his due, it was not so with respect to those which he ought to have received in presence of the Academy

Academy and the public. The bishop of Mirepoix, preceptor to the royal children, and who, since the recent death of cardinal Fleury, enjoyed most credit at court, employed that credit in obtaining a prohibition to M. de Maupertuis, the abbé's successor, from throwing upon the tomb of the deceased academician those vain flowers, which, indeed, add nothing to reputation, but which ought to be refused to vice alone, and yet have been so often lavished upon her in funeral orations.

Academy and the public. The friends of
 Mather, previous to the recent death of
 and who, since the recent death of
 and Mather, enjoyed most credit as con-
 sidered that death in obtaining a
 addition to M. de Mather, the whole
 lecturer, from the time when the camp
 of the deceased academy, their train
 rovers, which, indeed, add nothing to
 reputation, but which ought to be related
 to the same, and yet have been to their
 disadvantage in a funeral oration.

EULOGY

OF

JAMES BENIGNUS BOSSUET,
BISHOP OF MEAUX.

JAMES BENIGNUS BOSSUET was born at Dijon, on September 27, 1627, of a family distinguished in the parliament of Burgundy. From his childhood he devoted himself to study, with all the ardour of a rising genius, which seized upon and devoured every thing presented to it*. The Jesuits, his first masters, were not long in discovering in such a disciple the rudiments of a great man. According to their cus-

* See NOTE I.

tom, therefore, they employed the most artful insinuations to attract him into their society. By this policy they have acquired so many members celebrated in letters, whose works are at this day all that remains to the society of their former splendour; as the little good done to their fellow-creatures is all that remains of so many powerful men who have disappeared from the scene. These fathers already flattered themselves with adding to the list of their numerous conquests the name of the young Bossuet, the most brilliant, perhaps, of which they would ever have had to boast; but a very well-informed uncle who watched over him, and who, thoroughly knowing his instructors, watched over them too, suddenly put an end to this factitious vocation, by sending his nephew to Paris.

As he destined himself to the ecclesiastical profession, he embraced the whole circle of studies which he thought necessary,

fary, or simply useful, to this important ministry, from the interpretation of the Bible to that of the profane authors, and from the fathers of the church to the scholastic theologians and the mystic writers. His lively taste, and, as it might be called, passion for the sacred writings, foreboded the prelate who was to preach religion with the zeal of the apostles, and celebrate it with the eloquence of the prophets. Among the doctors of the church, St. Augustin was his favourite. He knew him by heart, quoted him perpetually, and always made him the companion of his journies. "In St. Augustin," said he, "I find an answer to every thing."

With respect to the authors of profane antiquity, among which he already sought for masters and models of eloquence; he gave the preference to Homer, whose sublime but uncontrolled genius most resembled his own. He also delighted in the perusal of Cicero and Virgil; but he

placed less value on Horace, whom he rather judged as a strict Christian than as a man of taste, and whose Epicurean morals effaced in his eyes the merit of the poet. He carried still further the austerity of his principles. Rigid casuists, it is well known, have regarded as a sort of apostasy the liberty assumed by most Christian poets, of employing in their performances the names of the pagan deities. Bossuet honoured these inexorable doctors with adopting their opinion. Boileau, in his "Art of Poetry," has given the best reply that a great poet can make to similar scruples; he has refuted them in harmonious verse. The lines of Boileau are remembered, and the sentence of the rigorists is forgotten *. The agreeable and philosophical fictions of ancient mythology, which gave every thing soul and animation, will continue, notwithstanding

* See NOTE II.

Bossuet's decree, to furnish great poets, without danger or scandal, with images always striking and novel from the charms which they will diffuse over them. As to the mob of versifiers, whose needy Muse, if deprived of Flora and Zephyr, Cupid and his wings, would be reduced to the extremest indigence, the insipid use they make of fable in their petty productions must have appeared to Bossuet himself rather tiresome than criminal*.

Of all profane studies, that of mathematics was the only one which our young ecclesiastic thought himself entitled to neglect; not through contempt, (such a contempt, we do not hesitate to say, would be a stain on the memory of the great Bossuet,) but because geometrical truths

* The insipidity of these worn-out fictions, when employed by small poets, is perhaps more obvious than their beauty and effect when adopted by great ones, especially in serious works. TRANSL.

seemed to him totally useless to religion. We should perhaps be accused of being at the same time judge and party, were we to appeal from this rigorous proscription: nevertheless, we must be permitted to remark, all private interest apart, that the theological student did not treat with due justice and understanding a science not so useless as he supposed to the theologian himself; a science in fact so well suited, not to rectify distorted intellects, condemned to remain as nature made them, but to strengthen in sound minds that justness of apprehension, which is by so much the more necessary, as the object of their meditations is the more important or sublime. Could Bossuet be ignorant, that the habit of demonstrating, while it prompts us to discover and seize evidence in every thing which is capable of that process, also teaches us not to call demonstration what is not so, and to distinguish those limits which, in the narrow circle of human know-

knowledge, separate broad day from twilight, and twilight from darkness?

Let us, however, be bold enough to confess that the indulgent Fenelon, in other respects so opposite to Bossuet, treated mathematics with still more harshness. He wrote in express terms to a young man whose director he was, "not to suffer himself to be bewitched by the *diabolical* attractions of geometry, which would extinguish in him the spirit of grace *." Doubtless the arid and severe speculations of this science, which Bossuet accused solely of being useless to theology; appeared to the tender and exalted soul of Fenelon the bane of those mystic contemplations in favour of which he has too manifestly displayed his weakness. But if this were the crime of geometry in the eyes of the archbishop of Cambray, it is difficult to discover its guilt.

* See the Spiritual Works of Fenelon, tom. iii. lett. 148.

Bossuet, while he shewed his little esteem for mathematics, did not testify the same indifference for philosophy, which, unfortunately for itself, was yet ignorant how much it depended on mathematical science. He acquired a fondness for Cartesianism, then but just springing to light. An understanding of his stamp, bold, extensive, vigorous, and ready to take wing, but chained down by the respected fetters of religion, felt all the value of the liberty which the philosophy of Descartes authorizes on all subjects on which it is allowed to doubt and to think. The violent attacks which this philosophy then underwent, even from theologians, far from intimidating Bossuet, contributed perhaps, without his consciousness, to inflame his zeal for persecuted reason. Already, magistrates, the foes of knowledge and of their age, had under the severest penalties forbidden the teaching of Cartesianism, which, however, notwithstanding this prohibition,

hibition, found means to establish itself little by little, and concluded with dethroning its scholastic rival. Since that time, the philosophy of Descartes, which had done little more than substitute new and seducing errors to old and absurd ones, has shared the fate of that of Aristotle, but without resistance or effort. This philosophy, so ineffectually attacked in its cradle by the imbecillity of power, would now as vainly resort to that protection with which Bossuet honoured it. It has perished under our eyes by a natural death, and reason alone has effected what authority could not do: an important, but almost fruitless lesson, to those who are possessed of power, not to use it in prescribing to reason what she ought to believe, but to suffer her of herself to distinguish what it is her business to reject, and what to adopt. The more authority agitates the vessel in which truths swim promiscuously with errors, the more it will retard
their

their separation; the longer it will delay that moment, which, however, will come sooner or later, when the errors will of themselves subside, and leave a clear space for the truths *.

While Bossuet fed his active understanding with all the objects of knowledge suitable to a minister of the church, his heart, not less active, and which also required an object worthy to fill it, formed itself to piety by frequent visits to the abbey of la Trappe; an abode which appears calculated to inspire the most lukewarm with a conviction of the efficacy of a lively and ardent faith in rendering dear the most rigorous privations; an abode which may afford even the philosopher interesting matter for reflection on the nothingness of glory and ambition, the consolations of retirement, and the happiness of obscurity.

* See NOTE III.

Bossuet's talents for the pulpit disclosed themselves almost from his infancy. He was announced as a phenomenon of early oratory at the hotel de Rambouillet, where merit of all kinds was summoned to appear, and was judged of, well or ill. He there, before a numerous and chosen assembly, made a sermon on a given subject, almost without preparation, and with the highest applause. The preacher was only sixteen years old, and the hour was eleven at night; which gave occasion to Voiture, who abounded in plays of words, to say, that he had never heard so early or so late a sermon.

Together with such rare talents for eloquence, nature had endowed Bossuet with a prodigious memory. He alone, without reckoning many other great men, would suffice to refute the trite axiom concerning the antipathy between the memory and the judgment; an axiom repeated with complacency by persons who flatter themselves

felves that nature has given them in judgment what it has denied them in memory.

Destined by taste and character to excel in eloquence and controversy, Bossuet bore, as it were, the impress of talents suited to the orator and the theologian. The tone of the pulpit changed as soon as he appeared. To the indecencies which debased, and the bad taste which degraded it, he substituted the force and dignity which become Christian morality. He did not write his sermons, or, rather, he wrote them only in an abridged form. After meditating profoundly on his subject, he threw upon paper the principal heads ; and sometimes he put down, one after the other, different expressions of the same thought, of which, in the heat of action, he seized that which first offered itself to the impetuosity of his career. His printed sermons, the remains of a prodigious number, (for he never twice preached

preached the same,) are rather the sketches of a great master, than finished pieces ; but this renders them the more valuable to those who delight in such designs to see the rapid strokes and dashes of a bold and free hand, and the first tints of creative enthusiasm. This glowing and rapturous fecundity, which in the pulpit resembled inspiration, subdued and bore along all hearers *. One of those persons who make a parade of their unbelief, wished to hear, or rather to brave him. Too proud to confess himself conquered, but too just to refuse the homage due to a great man, he exclaimed, on leaving the place, " This man to me " is the first of preachers ; for I feel it is " by him I should be converted, if I were " ever to be so."

In the midst of his oratorical triumphs, Bossuet commenced with distinction his theological warfare, by the refutation of the catechism of Paul Ferry, a Protestant

* See NOTE IV.

minister.

minister. This work, which announced a formidable adversary to the Reformed, obtained from the Catholic church a reception as favourable as its author could hope. But what ought not to be passed over in the history of a theological dispute, is, that the two champions, who were friends before, continued to be so after they had written against each other: a rare and worthy example to controversialists of all religions, which, however, will be rather praised than imitated, and would even be called scandalous by fanatics, if the name of him who gave the scandal did not force them to silence.

The splendid success of Bossuet soon carried his reputation to court, where his sermons were heard with transport*. Lewis XIV. a still better judge than his courtiers, did not delay to give him marks of his esteem more substantial than mere applauses. Though the new orator of

* See NOTE V.

Verfailles presented a spectacle as novel from his conduct as his eloquence, though he shewed himself only in the pulpit or at the foot of the altar, asked no favour, and, like almost all men of great abilities, was neither cautious nor supple; the recompence he merited came to him spontaneously in the solitude in which he lived at court, and the king nominated him to the see of Condom. Bossuet, who saw in Bourdaloue a rising successor worthy of him, and formed on his own model, resigned the sceptre of Christian eloquence into the hands of the illustrious rival to whom he had opened the path of glory, and was neither surprised nor jealous at seeing the disciple surpass his master. He soon confined himself to a particular species in which he had neither superior nor equal, that of funeral orations. All of these which he has delivered bear the stamp of the strong and elevated mind that produced them; all resound with those

those terrible truths which the powerful of this world cannot too often hear, and which it is so unfortunate and culpable in them to forget. There it is (to use his own words) that “ all the gods of the earth are seen degraded from their dignity by the hands of death, and swallowed up in eternity, as rivers lose their name and glory when mingled in the ocean along with the most inconsiderable streams.” If, in these admirable discourses, the orator’s eloquence is not every where equal ; if he even sometimes appears to lose himself, he excuses his deviations by the immense height to which he soars.. The reader feels that his genius demands unbounded liberty for expanding itself in all its vigour ; and that the shackles of severe taste, the details of punctilious correctness, and the dryness of perfect regularity, would only enervate his glowing and rapid eloquence. His bold independence, which seems to spurn every

every kind of fetters, causes him sometimes to neglect even the dignified style in his expressions; a happy negligence! since it animates and hurries on that vigorous career in which he abandons himself to all the vehemence and energy of his soul. One might suppose that the tongue he uses was created for him alone, that even in speaking the language of savages he would have compelled admiration, and that he only required a single mode, whatever it were, for transferring to the minds of his hearers all the grandeur of his own ideas. Frigid and scrupulous censors, who, in the midst of so many beauties, should preserve tranquillity enough to remark a few spots, incapable of effacing them, might be answered in the words of lord Bolingbroke* in another sense applied to the duke of Marlborough, "He was so great a man, that I have forgot his faults."

* Lord Peterborough. TRANSL.

This orator, with all his sublimity, is also pathetic, but without losing any of his grandeur ; for elevation, scarcely compatible with ingenious refinement, is capable of forming the happiest alliance with sensibility, which it renders more interesting by ennobling it. Bossuet, says a celebrated writer, obtained the greatest and most uncommon of victories, that of causing the court to shed tears at the funeral oration for Henrietta of England, duchess of Orleans. He was himself interrupted by sobs, as he pronounced these words, which are impressed upon every one's memory, and are never thought too often repeated :
 " O night of disaster, night of dismay,
 " on which, like a thunder-clap, the overwhelming news burst forth, Madame is
 " dying, Madame is dead * !" A softer, but

* The different genius of either the languages or manners of the two nations, absolutely precludes in English the use, in a passage of sublimity, of that technical

but not less sublime, stroke of sensibility, is found in the concluding words of the funeral oration on the Great Condé. It was this fine discourse that terminated Bossuet's oratorical career; and he finished with his master-piece; in which it is to be regretted that he has not been imitated by several illustrious men, less prudent or less fortunate than he. "Prince," said he, addressing himself to the deceased hero, "with you shall end all these exertions of the preacher: instead of deploring the death of others, I will henceforth learn of you how to sanctify my own; happy if, warned by these grey hairs of the account I am to render of my ministry, I reserve for the flock committed to me to be fed with the word of life, the relicks of a failing voice, and of a

technical designation of a person of rank, which does not offend a French ear in the title of *Madame*.

TRANSL.

“ dying ardour.” The affecting conjunction presented in this picture between a great man who has quitted the stage, and another who is soon to disappear, penetrates the soul with a soft and profound melancholy, by giving it a painful perception of the vain and fugitive splendour of parts and renown, the misery of the human condition, and the weakness of an attachment to a life so short and sorrowful *.

The brilliant reputation which Bossuet had acquired made the French Academy desirous of possessing a man already so celebrated, and whose name it now regards as one which honours it the most †. Lewis XIV. at the same time entrusted him with a much more important post. He judged, that one who from the pulpit displayed with so much force the greatness of the Deity, and the wretchedness of hu-

* See NOTE VI.

† He was admitted June 8, 1671.

manity,

manity, was the fittest of all persons to imprint these truths upon the heir of the crown, by a methodical series of private instructions. Bossuet was in consequence named preceptor to the Dauphin. Permit us a moment to give way to a reflection naturally arising from so praise-worthy a choice. The surest way, perhaps, of appreciating kings, is to consider who are the persons to whom they grant their confidence. Lewis XIV. gave his son and grandson, for governors, the two most virtuous men about the court, and especially the greatest enemies to meanness and adulation, Montausier and Beauvilliers; for preceptors, he gave them the two most illustrious prelates in France, Bossuet and Fenelon; and for sub-preceptors, Huet and Fleury, the one the most learned, the other the wisest and most enlightened of the ecclesiastics of the second order. If to these excellent selections for a single object, be added those of Condé, Turenne,

Luxembourg, Colbert, and Louvois; and attention be further paid to the exquisite taste with which the monarch estimated the very different talents of Boileau and Racine, of Quinault and Moliere, the merit of whom he had the honour of pointing out to his court, and almost to the nation; a moderate share of candour will dictate the conclusion, that if Lewis XIV. has received too much incense from his flatterers, he also deserved applause from the mouth of truth and justice *. Bosuet, and other men of genius, whose abilities this prince worthily employed in

* Too much credit here seems to be given to Lewis for merely following the public opinion, and accepting the services of men of acknowledged distinction in their several walks, who were formed without his aid or encouragement. The exquisite literary discernment here attributed to him, must certainly be taken with abatement, since a bad education had rendered him notoriously and irremediably uninformed as to the first principles of composition.

TRANSL.

the

the brilliant days of his glory, ought to obtain his pardon for some instances of a less happy choice towards the close of his life; the melancholy fruits of the misfortune of reigning, and especially of growing old on the throne.

The Dauphin's preceptor, persuaded that they to whom the formidable office of educating a king is entrusted, are responsible for the welfare of the people, and at the same time convinced that for a prince to become virtuous it suffices that he be enlightened, neglected no means of adorning the mind of his august pupil with all those parts of knowledge which appeared to him suited to make a just and well-informed sovereign. With a determination to devote himself entirely to so sacred an object, he resigned the bishopric of Condom, and received in exchange an abbacy of very moderate revenue, but sufficient for his moderate desires. He prepared himself for the education of the

L 4

dauphin

dauphin by recommencing as it were his own. He resumed those early studies which he had long abandoned. He even exercised himself in writing Latin, not that he flattered himself with being able to speak well a dead language, but in order to render it more familiar to him ; much in the same manner as those amateurs, who, for the purpose of learning how to judge of pictures, do not scruple themselves to make drawings, which they value at no more than they are worth. In fine, he omitted nothing to shelter himself from all reproach, should an education so carefully prepared prove less successful than he hoped, and should the genius of the preceptor not be adequately seconded by that of the pupil.

Some court prelates, who looked upon their assiduity at Versailles as a just claim to the favours of the sovereign, were secretly but deeply wounded at the preference given to Bossuet, in filling a post to which their proud mediocrity did not blush

blush to form pretensions. In order to revenge themselves on account of so just a preference, they gave out that the preceptor carried his zeal for the prince's instruction so far as to weary and disgust him. "The dauphin," said they, with affected pity, "complained that he was "obliged to learn how Vaugirard * was "named in the time of the druids." To judge of this ridiculous charge, it is sufficient to read the celebrated "Discourse on Universal History," which Bossuet composed for the use of his pupil. In this grand sketch, we admire a genius equally extensive and profound, which, disdaining to dwell upon frivolous details, so precious to the herd of historians, surveys and judges with a glance legislators and conquerors, kings and nations, the crimes and virtues of men; and traces, with a bold and rapid pencil, time devouring and swallowing up all things, the hand

* A village near Paris.

of God heavy upon human grandeur, and kingdoms perishing like their masters. How could the eagle which had kenneled from such an elevation and distance—how could the painter who had treated in so great a style the history of the world—descend, in the detail of a prince's education, to trifles unworthy alike of the prince and himself? And even had the pupil requested it, how could the master have ventured to indulge him?

We shall not enfeeble the praises given to this work by a tiresome repetition. We shall rather think it due to the author to make for him an apology upon an essential and delicate point, which perhaps may become a new eulogy. Bossuet has been charged with having been, in this master-piece of eloquence, more an orator than a historian, and a theologian than a philosopher; and with having spoken too much of the Jews, and too little of those nations who render ancient history chiefly interesting;

interesting ; sacrificing, as it were, the universe to a people whom all the rest affected to despise. He replied to this censure, that if he appeared, in so grand a draught, to have neglected the rest of the world for the only people to whom the true God was known, it was because he thought it his duty, not only towards that God whose minister he was, but towards all France, whose fate was confided to his instructions, to point out to his pupil in every part of the picture the object most calculated to force kings to be just—the eternal and omnipotent Being, by whose severe eye they are watched, and whose awful sentence is to judge them. Bossuet shuddered in reflecting how lamentable would be the lot of humanity, if the small number of men to whom Providence has subjected their fellow-creatures, and who have nothing to fear on earth but the moment of quitting it, should not behold above their thrones a Supreme Arbiter who has promised

promised to avenge those tears of the wretched which they have caused or suffered to flow. This citizen-prelate was persuaded, that even they who should be unfortunate enough to regard the belief of a God as useless to other men, would commit the crime of *lese-humanity* by attempting to free monarchs from this article of faith. It is for subjects to trust in God, and for sovereigns to fear him *.

The dauphin's education completed, Bossuet, whom the king had recompensed with the bishopric of Meaux, consecrated himself anew and without cessation to the service of religion. Hitherto we have scarcely viewed him as a profound and zealous theologian; he appears, nevertheless, to have been more jealous of his success in controversy, than of his talents for eloquence; as Descartes thought himself greater from his metaphysical speculations, than his geometrical dis-

* See NOTE VII.

coveries. But the theological triumphs of Bossuet, whatever their value, are that part of his praise which it belongs to us to touch upon with most reserve: his victories of this kind rather concern the history of the church than that of the academy, and deserve to be appreciated by better judges than we are. In the immense collection of his works, all his riches of this kind, and all the vigour of his powers, are displayed. There he appears continually at war either with infidelity or with heresy, braving and repelling each, and covering the church with his ægis against this double enemy which aims at its destruction. His warlike inclination seems to pursue him even in the pieces which he devoted to eloquence. He sometimes forgets that he is an orator, to resign himself to his darling controversy; and deigning from the throne whence he fulminates to descend into the arena, he quits, if we may so speak, the

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thunder.

thunder-bolt for the cestus ; but he soon resumes his proper weapon, and the boxer is forgotten in the god.

While he was the intrepid defender of the faith of the church, he was not less zealous as a maintainer of its rights. He was the soul of the famous assembly of the clergy in 1682, where these rights were stated with so much strength, and supported with so much vigour. The church of France and that of Rome were then in violent division concerning the matter of *franchises*, and especially that of the *regal*, for which pope Innocent XI. displayed a zeal which transported him even to menaces. Already this enterprising pontiff, more obstinate than politic, had declared, that in order to prevent the fatal evil which threatened religion, he should have recourse, were it necessary, to the violent remedies which Providence had entrusted to his hands. This language, which would have made king Robert tremble in the

the eleventh century, was not calculated, in the seventeenth, to intimidate Lewis XIV. and still less the bishop of Meaux. But the court of Rome, notwithstanding the loftiness of the monarch, and the firmness of Bossuet, was the more confident in the display of its dissatisfaction or zeal, as its pretensions were supported by some of the worthiest prelates in the French church. The resistance made by the respectable bishops of Alet and Pamiers to the *regal* right, which they thought injurious to the episcopacy, is well known. The irritated monarch thought of summoning the two prelates to his court, in order to make them feel the full weight of his indignation. "God preserve you from it, sire," said the bishop of Meaux, who sincerely interested himself in the king's glory: "fear lest the whole road travelled by these bishops, from the extremity of Languedoc to Versailles, should be lined by an immense crowd asking benediction.

" OR

“ on their knees.” Lewis yielded to this prudent advice. He was afraid of seeing authority fail against arms rendered the more powerful by their apparent weakness, and the fulminating eloquence of Bossuet overcome by the popular but persuasive eloquence of courageous and persecuted virtue.

Whatever were the merits of this contest, now happily pacified, we are indebted to it for one of Bossuet's most celebrated works, his famous “ Defence of the Gallican church ;” to this day regarded by this church as its firmest bulwark against ultramontane attacks, and as the *palladium* of what it terms its *liberties*. This denomination is, however, improper, since these *liberties* are in fact no other than the ancient and common right of all churches, preserved by that of France, and forgotten by almost all the rest. The bishop of Meaux's work on this subject, while it raised to the highest pitch his episcopal

copal and theological fame, deprived him of a cardinal's hat, which the pope had offered him, provided he would consent, not openly to defend the claims of the tiara, but solely not to oppose them. Bossuet, a faithful subject as well as a worthy bishop, readily renounced an honour which could add nothing to the consideration he enjoyed in the church; for he would have conferred more lustre on the purple than he could have received from it; and the want of his name is a much greater loss to the sacred college, than that of the title of *eminence* is to his name. We may only wonder that Lewis XIV. who had a right to nominate a cardinal among the bishops of his kingdom, should have frustrated of this recompense the prelate who had so well defended the independence and rights of the crown. We know not what reasons prevented a prince so sensible to glory of every kind, from conferring lustre on himself by this act of

greatness and justice ; but we reject with contempt and indignation a suggestion of the enemies of this great king, “ that he “ did not think the bishop of Meaux of a “ *family good enough* for such a dignity ;” as if he could suppose any dignity superior to the honour he had done Bossuet, by entrusting to him his most sacred and dearest interests ; and as if it was necessary to be of a better family to obtain the appellation of priest or deacon of the Roman church, than to be the oracle of the church of France, and preceptor to the heir of a great empire *.

With a soul elevated, active, full of strength and fervour, with a temper firm and impetuous, and, above all, with distinguished talents, Bossuet was not likely to want enemies. Perhaps he had the fault of making his superiority too sensible to those moderate capacities which were crushed by it. Too certain of conquering

* See NOTE VIII.

to think himself obliged to please, he neglected to temper the splendour of his fame by a modesty which would have made it tolerable. His noble pride more than once received at court, not those violent strokes which calumny would not have dared to inflict, but those indirect attacks which are less hazardous to the coward hand of envy. He one day presented to Lewis XIV. father Mabillon, as "the most learned Religious of his kingdom."—"And the humblest too," said le Tellier, archbishop of Rheims, who thereby thought to epigrammatise adroitly the modesty of the prelate. The same archbishop, however, humiliated as he felt himself by the elevated genius of Bossuet, was too just to suffer it to be slighted. Some young court chaplains, one of whom has since occupied high stations, talking one day in his presence, with French levity, of the works and abilities of the bishop of Meaux, whom they ven-

tured to ridicule; "Be silent," said le Tellier, "respect your master and
"ours."

That circumstance in the life of Bossuet which must have given him the most concern, was the obligation he thought imposed upon him by duty, of combating, in the person of Fenelon, virtue herself, but virtue led astray. The opinions of the archbishop of Cambray concerning Quietism appeared to him the more dangerous, the more their patron was calculated to seduce, by the sweetness of his manners and the charms of his eloquence. It was said of him, in comparison with the bishop of Meaux, that the latter proved religion, but that Fenelon made it beloved. Bossuet, inexorably attached to sound doctrine, sacrificed to it without hesitation the friendship he had hitherto professed for the archbishop of Cambray. He wrote against him with all the force which the cause of the faith naturally infuses into its defender.

Perhaps

Perhaps even his religious warmth sometimes betrayed him into unguarded expressions against his virtuous adversary; at least, the latter thought himself injured, and complained of it, though with that mildness which never forsook him. The enemies of Bossuet, less moderate and equitable than Fenelon, dared to add, that the real cause of the heat he shewed in this dispute was jealousy, and a wish to sequester from the court a rival, as well suited by his talents to make enthusiasts, as worthy by his character to acquire friends. At the same time, the partizans of the bishop of Meaux accused Fenelon of artifice and duplicity. These odious imputations were much more the work of the two parties than of their chiefs, who had each too much greatness to attack the other with so much bitterness and scandal. We ought to place on the same level all these mutual products of passion

and hatred, and deplore the malignity of mankind *.

The Protestants, and especially the fanatic Jurieu, whose calumnies would have dishonoured the best cause, have also charged Bossuet with barbarity on their account, and with having, by his counsels, given authority to the violent persecution, so contrary to Christianity, to humanity, and even to policy, which Lewis XIV. had the misfortune to direct, or to permit, against the Reformed. No one, however, is ignorant, that persons then in high credit, and still more hostile to Bossuet living than to Calvin dead, were the detestable authors of this persecution, the odium of which they wished to cast upon the bishop of Meaux. But he loudly denied being their accomplice. He was not afraid to call the new converts to witness his protestations against those military and cruel

* See NOTE IX.

expeditions,

expeditions, so well known under the name of the *dragoon mission*. Accustomed to employ only the arms of persuasion in bringing back his strayed brethren, " he " could not," he said, " prevail upon " himself to look upon bayonets as instruments of conversion *."

Filled with a sincere desire of re-uniting the Protestants to the church by the way of conciliation, he engaged in a correspondence by letter with the celebrated Leibnitz, on this object, so worthy of occupying these two great men. But Leibnitz, more attached to toleration than controversy, and rather a philosopher than a Protestant, treated the business of religion as he would have done a negotiation between sovereigns. Little acquainted or little moved with the inflexible rigour of Catholics in matters of faith, he thought that each of the belligerent par-

* See NOTE X.

ties ought to make some sacrifices for peace, and yield one point to obtain another. Bossuet, immovable in his belief, required, as a preliminary, that the Protestants should begin with submitting to all that the council of Trent demanded of them. It will readily be supposed that the theologian negotiator could not come to terms with the accommodating one. In vain did a reformed minister, in a publication, exhort Bossuet to make concessions. "That is," said Bayle, "in plain French, exhorting him to turn Protestant. Without being prophets, we may assure ourselves that he will do no such thing *."

* This, in fact, has always been the true state of the case, in attempts to effect an union between the Catholic and Protestant churches. The former *cannot*, consistently with their principles, consent to any change, except in mere trifles. To the latter, such changes are essential. It is obvious, therefore, that they can never meet. TRANSL.

It

It has not been thought enough to tax his zeal with cruelty; suspicions have been thrown out against its sincerity. It has been asserted, that he entertained philosophical opinions different from his theology, like those lawyers who, in their pleadings, urge in their favour a law the weakness of which they are conscious of. Hatred has thus endeavoured to render him at the same time criminal and ridiculous, by accusing him of having spent his life and abilities in disputes which he knew to be futile. The best reply to this charge is that which Bossuet himself made by the tone in which he ventured to speak to Lewis XIV. at the time of his disputes with the archbishop of Cambray. Astonished at his ardour, "What would you have done," said the monarch, "if I had taken part with Fenelon against you?" — "Sire," returned Bossuet, "I would have spoken twenty times as loud." He too well knew the domi-

nion of faith over the king's mind to fear offending him by this answer ; but how great soever the confidence in a prince's piety, it requires courage to put it to such a proof. Bossuet was convinced that the touchstone of a sincere love for religion is, not to declaim with violence against its enemies when unsupported and without power, but [courageously to maintain its rights, when there is danger in doing so, against a king who has forgotten them. He feared not to assert, that every minister of the Supreme Being, who, stationed near the throne, draws back or hesitates under such momentous circumstances, is unworthy of that Deity whom he represents by his character, but betrays by his silence. On another occasion he gave a still more striking proof of his episcopal greatness of mind. Some vile and unprincipled monks, in the dedication of a thesis, had practised the base impiety of placing their king and their God in parallel,

rallel, "in such a manner," says Madame de Sevigné, "that it clearly appeared that "God was only the copy." Bossuet laid his complaints of this scandal before the very monarch so unworthily celebrated. The pious modesty of the king blushed at the comparison, and he commanded the suppression of the thesis *.

The bishop of Meaux was, however, too enlightened to endanger religion by extravagance of zeal. He knew, that if truth ought not to dread approaching the throne, neither ought it to approach but with that prudent firmness which prepares and assures its triumph. As he had written forcibly against public spectacles, he was once consulted as a casuist on the subject by Lewis XIV. who had not yet renounced attending upon the master-pieces of the theatre, and to whom this noble relaxation was perhaps necessary, in order to teach him some of those truths which

* See NOTE XI.

are seldom spoken to kings *. Bossuet's reply was; " Sire, there are great ex-
 " amples for, and strong reasons against."
 If the answer was not decisive, it was both
 ingenious and noble †. The prelate had
 himself visited the theatre when young,
 but it was only to form his elocution. He
 took lessons, in order, as he said, " to en-
 " rich himself, like the Israelites, with
 " the spoils of the Egyptians:" but he
 had seldom employed this dangerous mode

* See NOTE XII.

† But what wretched inconsistency!—to have one
 set of morals for use, and another for parade; to
 be rigid in trifles, and lax in things of importance.
 How much better would it have been, to have given
 Lewis free indulgence in theatrical amusements, and
 to have employed all the arms of religion against his
 wars and adulteries! But it is the necessary con-
 sequence of a systematic austerity carried beyond
 the bounds of reason and practicability, that it must
 admit of evasions and substitutions, under which the
 most serious crimes will take shelter as well as the most
 venial transgressions. TRANSL.

of

of instruction, and, after he took orders, renounced it entirely. He even refused to see the tragedy of *Esther*, at the representation of which all the pious persons about court caballed for the honour and pleasure of attendance. He was still more rigid than those scrupulous and timid spectators, who were happy to indulge their avidity for these devout amusements, without any qualms of conscience.

Though the bishop of Meaux, faithful to his principles, dared on important occasions to address the king with a liberty which made the courtiers tremble for him, yet the inflexible doctor Arnauld, for want of knowing men, and especially kings, accused him as deficient in courage to lay before the monarch those truths which it was essential for him to hear. It will, doubtless, be supposed that Arnauld meant to allude to the king's gallantries, his taste for expence, and love for war : but his complaint only regarded Bossuet's want
of

of zeal in maintaining before Lewis the interests of the *disciples of St. Augustine*; the title which Arnauld gave to the partisans of his doctrine respecting the signature of the Formulary. Borne away, and, as it were, subjugated by his theological opinions, he saw nothing in the universe besides the wretched disputes which were too hurtful to his repose, and too unworthy of his genius.

If the *disciples of St. Augustine* were dissatisfied with Bossuet's lukewarmness in their defence, their enemies were still more so with his coolness in persecuting them; and this dissatisfaction on both sides is his best eulogy. He was not ignorant, that on account of his supposed indulgence to the Jansenists, the artful father de la Chaise secretly rendered him those kind offices with the king, which insidious craft is so capable of rendering to unsuspecting honesty. But for this time, at least, hypocritical and jealous
 malignity

malignity spread its nets at court to no purpose, and the ascendancy of the prelate disconcerted the artifice of the confessor *.

The Jesuit Maimbourg, a writer of no authority, but the vile instrument of the enemies of Bossuet, who aimed their shafts at him from behind this forlorn hope, was accustomed, in his heavy and tedious histories, to paint under borrowed names those who were the objects of his satire. In his "History of Lutheranism," he gave the imaginary portrait of Bossuet under the name of cardinal Contarini, whose divinity and accommodating policy he exposed in terms which, with more clearness than ingenuity, indicated the bishop of Meaux. A portrait with so little resemblance had the success it merited; no one recognized the features of Bossuet in it; and Maimbourg, already ridiculous as an

* See NOTE XIII.

historian,

historian, was additionally so as a calumniator*.

We shall not waste time in repelling a falsehood already more than once refuted, concerning the pretended marriage of a prelate so austere in his morals. To this calumny we shall only offer a short answer, which will suffice to the impartial and philosophical reader. Bossuet was too much occupied with controversy, too much absorbed in theological speculations, too absolutely devoted to his closet, the church, and polemics, to be obliged to have recourse to those consolations which tender and tranquil souls may seek in mutual union. To him, contests were more necessary than domestic society, and glory than attachments.

Far from applying to this sweetener of the ills of life, he neglected even the most simple amusements. He went abroad

* See NOTE XIV.

little, and never paid visits. One day, having carelessly asked his gardener about his trees, "My lord," said the gardener, "if I were to plant St. Augustines and St. Jeromes, you would come and see them; but as to your trees, you trouble yourself very little about them *.

Satiated with toils and triumphs, after the death of the great Condé, he put in execution what he had declared on concluding that prince's funeral oration. He gave himself up totally to the care and instruction of that diocese which Providence had committed to him, and in the bosom of which he had resolved to finish his days. Disgusted with the world and with glory, he now, he said, only aspired "to be buried at the feet of his holy predecessors." He no longer ascended the pulpit but to preach to his people that religion, which, having so long through his mouth struck terror into the sovereigns

* See Note XV.

and great ones of the earth, now, through the same mouth came to be the consolation of weakness and indigence. He even condescended to catechise children, especially those of the poor, nor thought himself degraded by this function, so worthy of a bishop. It was a rare and touching spectacle to behold the great Bossuet, transferred from the chapel of Versailles to a village church, teaching the peasants to support their misfortunes patiently, tenderly assembling their young families around him, delighting in the innocence of the children and the simplicity of their parents, and finding in their words, gestures, and affections, that precious *truth*, which he had vainly sought at court, and rarely found among the rest of mankind. Retired to his closet as soon as he had any moments at his disposal, he continued there to fulfil the duties of pastor and father; and his door was ever open to the afflicted who came to ask advice, consolation,

tion, or relief. They were never sent away with the answer another *very learned* prelate * caused to be given them—"My lord is at his studies." The study of the gospel, which this *studious* prelate ought to have preferred to any other, had taught Bossuet, that the obligation of all seasons, to him who is to declare to men a Deity of goodness and justice, is to open his arms to all who suffer, and to dry up their tears.

It was in these labours of pastoral love that Bossuet ended his life, on April 12, 1704, honoured by the regrets of the whole church, which will preserve a dear and everlasting remembrance of his doctrine, his eloquence, and his attachment. He has, indeed, received from it a kind of apotheosis, in the respect paid to his works, the weight given to his authority in matters of faith, and the homage that

* Huet, bishop of Avranches.

all the parties which divide and lacerate the church have constantly rendered to the name of the bishop of Meaux. Religion, whose most courageous defender he ever was, appears by its suffrage to have confirmed the eulogy which la Bruyere was not afraid to give this great man in a full Academy, when, mentioning Bossuet in his admission-discourse, he exclaimed, in a transport shared by his auditors, " Let us anticipate the language of posterity—
*" a father of the Church *."*

* See NOTE XVI.

NOTES

TO THE

EULOGY OF BOSSUET.

NOTE I.

THE pleasure that the young Bossuet took in learning made him forget even the amusements so indispensable to ordinary boys. His school-fellows, who could not prevail upon him to join their sports, revenged themselves by a puerile pleasantry, calling him, in allusion to his name, "Bos fuetus aratro"—an ox inured to the plough. When Domenichino, in the school of the Carracci, on account of his laborious assiduity, had received the same epithet from his comrades, Annibal Carracci told them, "This ox will one

“ day give great fertility to the field he
 “ tills.” Bossuet’s masters might have
 made a similar observation.

NOTE II.

THE Latin versifier Santueil, obliged by his condition to be more submissive than Boileau to the decisions of Bossuet, shewed much more docility with respect to the use he had made in his verses of the Pagan deities. The bishop of Meaux having reproached him with the introduction of Pomona into a Latin poem on the gardens of Versailles, he addressed to his formidable censor another piece which he called *Amende Honorable*, and placed at its head an engraving of himself, with a cord round his neck and a taper in his hand, prostrated at the feet of Bossuet as a public penitent. The same poet had a brother named Claude, a man of merit, who wrote verses almost as well as he, and was much more pious. Claude was continually reproaching

proaching his brother with the profane use he made of the gods of heathenism. "Is it not possible," said he, "to write an agreeable description of a fountain or a wood, unless a nymph or a naiad is concealed in it?—Why, too, put females every where?—Do not they do mischief enough where nature has placed them?" The dispute growing warm, Claude betted that, without the help of fable, he would make a better poem than his brother, with it. The Academy, whom the rivals took for arbiter in the wager, adjudged the prize to Claude Santeuil, though Peter Corneille had done the performance of his brother Victorin the honour to translate it into French verse.

NOTE III.

How superannuated soever is now that philosophy of Descartes, which Bossuet defended so warmly because there was then

no better, a set of men in credit, and who thought highly of their own wisdom, attempted thirty years ago to restore it with respect to certain articles. It was not the fault of these great philosophers, that the doctrine of *innate ideas* failed of being erected into a kind of article of faith, and that the schools were not enjoined to anathematise every contrary opinion. In places which ought to have been the abode of truth alone, grave orators have been known to pronounce long discourses in order to establish this chimæra as the base of our faith. What renders this new catechism more strange is, that, before Descartes, a philosopher would almost have been regarded as a heretic who should have admitted these *innate ideas*; whereas, in our days, they who have rejected them have been charged with *materialism*. The enemies of reason, who so indifferently maintain either side of a question according to circumstances, might, at each change,

say with Sganarelle, when he put the heart on the right side and the liver on the left, " We have altered all that."

NOTE IV.

THE oratorical fertility of Bossuet was so prodigious, that having undertaken to preach the panegyric of St. Augustine, he spoke near an hour and a half on the subject, and then descended from the pulpit without having begun his second head, leaving his audience more astonished at his abundance of matter, than wearied with their long attendance.

NOTE V.

BOSSUET had delivered his first sermons at Metz, where he went to reside as canon and archdeacon. His striking success in the pulpits of Metz, and in those of Paris, when the affairs of his chapter brought him thither, gave the court a desire to hear

hear him. Such was the applause he received in preaching before it, that Lewis XIV. caused a letter to be written to his father, felicitating him upon the abilities of a son, "destined," said the king, "to immortalize the author of his days." The father, who was dean of the parliament of Metz, being a widower, and free from engagements, had entered into the church, after the example of his son, who regarded this conquest as the happiest he had gained for religion. Bossuet being one day ready to mount the pulpit, news was brought him that his respectable father was dying, and wished to see him once more and expire in his arms. He did not hesitate to act the son in preference to the priest. Quitting his auditory, he flew to his father, and had the happiness of arriving time enough to assist him in his last moments, and close his eyes.

NOTE VI.

OF six funeral orations delivered by Bossuet, four had the most brilliant success. Two were less fortunate; one, in consequence of the sterility, the other, of the difficulty, of the matter. The first of these was that upon the queen Maria Theresa, who had been merely a pious princess, scarcely perceived on the throne; the second, that upon chancellor le Tellier, an hypocritical and persecuting courtier. Nevertheless, in these two pieces, little worthy of Bossuet, are sometimes found the "*disjecti membra oratoris*"—the scattered limbs of a man of genius. The puerile familiarities which in some places deform the funeral oration on the Princess Palatine, successively characterised by gallantry, infidelity, intrigue, and devotion, are obliterated by several passages of the most animated and commanding eloquence.

quence. The introductory sentence displays the noble confidence with which the orator is inspired by his subject. "I would that all the souls alienated from God were present in this assembly." We shall not speak of the other three orations, almost the whole of which deserve committing to memory. But we shall venture to say, that, in the funeral oration for the queen of England, the portrait of Cromwell, so often quoted by rhetoricians, appears to us by no means the most distinguished passage. The energetic sketch which the orator draws of Cromwell's profound policy, is a piece worthy of Tacitus, and much superior to the merely oratorical portrait of that usurper.

The picture that in the same discourse he draws of the annihilation of human dignities "devoured and swallowed up by death," may be contrasted with one he has presented in another piece, where, speaking with rapture of the celestial bliss,

he

he shews “ the saints astonished with their
 “ own glory, and finding eternity a space
 “ scarcely long enough in which to know
 “ themselves again—*se reconnoitre*.” Delicate readers will doubtless feel a want of dignity in this last expression ; but let them, if they can, substitute another equally energetic ; and especially let them remark with what success Bossuet has set off this vulgar phrase by the grandeur of the idea and image. Thus our great orator, though he seems to neglect and even to disdain the artifice of style, is however a model in it, at least with respect to his skill and happiness in occasionally ennobling the familiarity of his expressions. It is particularly on this account that he may be *read* with advantage, and is therefore worthy of being placed among our great writers. For if, in a work intended for public delivery, the most indispensable merit for momentary splendour and effect is to move and astonish, this merit passes away, when the
 reader,

reader, cool and tranquil, silently revokes the enthusiastic approbation of the hearer. The negligence of Bossuet not only partook of grandeur and spirit, but of a sort of art to be perceived by keen and practised eyes alone, which demonstrated to persons of taste, how a superior writer can at the same time invigorate and control a timid and punctilious language.

The first use he made of his eloquence deserves still more applause than the eloquence itself;—he employed it in the expression of his gratitude. He pronounced at the college of Navarre the funeral oration of the famous Nicholas Cornet, headmaster of that college, who had directed his first studies; and he mentions with sensibility every thing for which he thought himself indebted to his master. “Can I,” says he, “refuse to him some
“products of a mind which he cultivated
“with truly paternal kindness, or deny
“him some share in my compositions,
“after

“ after he has so often been their censor
 “ and judge ?” It must, however, be
 confessed, that this funeral oration is the
 least excellent of all that he delivered, and
 that it is even difficult to foresee, in the
 panegyrist of Nicholas Cornet, that of
 Henrietta and Condé. But, if not a mo-
 nument of genius, it is one of virtue ;
 whence alone it acquires value in the eu-
 logy of a man whose virtues have been
 more disputed than his talents *.

NOTE VII.

“ I AM accused,” said the prelate, “ of
 “ having in this history sacrificed every
 “ thing to the Jewish nation, and of having
 “ almost forgotten such men as Alexander
 “ and Socrates, Cæsar and Cato, for Da-

* By dwelling on so trifling a proof of moral
 merit as the composition of a funeral sermon for an
 old master, the eulogist throws more suspicion on the
 virtues of Bossuet than if he had said nothing on the
 subject.

TRANSL.

“ vid,

“ vid, Ezechiel, and Baruch. My reason
 “ was, that the knowledge of God was
 “ still more necessary to my pupil than
 “ the knowledge of men. Religion,
 “ which human policy believes so essential
 “ to those who obey, is still more so to
 “ those who command.” In consequence,
 it was his particular care, in teaching
 history to his disciple, to make him remark
 with dread the punishment of bad princes.
 And where this did not take place in the
 present life, he employed the chastisements
 of a future world to impress a salutary
 terror on the prince’s mind *.

* Bossuet’s predilection for the Jewish history was,
 however, probably owing to the lessons it affords to
 kings, of the necessity of preserving the purity of
 faith and worship in order to obtain the favour of
 Heaven. Theological zeal appears to have been
 the ruling passion in Bossuet’s mind; nor was it
 considerably tempered by charity or candour.

TRANSL.

NOTE VIII.

THE obstinacy with which, at this conjuncture, pope Innocent XI. opposed the just rights asserted by Lewis XIV. and defended by Bossuet, might have occasioned an eternal schism between France and Rome, if the monarch had been of the disposition of Henry VIII. of England, who, in order to marry at his pleasure, did not hesitate to make his whole kingdom heretics. Happily, the pious Lewis, penetrated from childhood with the profoundest veneration for the holy see, shewed himself on this occasion still more a Christian than a king. This prince, at the same time conqueror of Rome * and a subject to the church, would have crowned his glory by forcing the pope to honour

* This exaggerated expression probably alludes to his haughty triumph over the civil power of the pope, in the affair of the Corsican guards, who had insulted his ambassador.

TRANSL.

with the purple the prelate who had been, in so important an emergence, the defender of his crown, as he was his oracle and counsel in matters of faith. Another instance of his neglect of this great man is related. He refused Bossuet's request of the vacant bishopric of Beauvais, because " he did not chuse to bestow a peerage on " a man born in the rank of citizens."

Will it be credited, that, after the death of Bossuet, Lewis XIV. who thirty years before had made such an opposition to the pontifical claims, had the weakness, towards the close of his life, to change his resolution, through the perfidious and punishable advice of his confessor, the Jesuit le Tellier?—Will it be credited, that Benedict XIV. had in his possession a letter from this prince to Clement XI. in which he promised the pope to oblige all the bishops in his kingdom to retract the solemn sanction they had given to the four propositions, (drawn up by Bossuet,) that is,

the declaration they had made that the pope had no right to depose their sovereign?—Will it be credited, that the impostor who directed his conscience had determined him to support throughout his kingdom the doctrine of the papal infallibility; and that this project would have taken place, had not some prudent and clear-sighted persons demonstrated to the Jesuit himself the fatal effects that might arise from it?—Will it be credited, that, under the reign of Lewis XV. an assembly of the clergy, forced by superior orders, disavowed (obscurely and ineffectually, indeed) the four propositions of 1682?—In fine, will it be credited, that the celebrated work of Bossuet in defence of these propositions did not appear till 1730, twenty-six years after his death, and could not be printed except in foreign countries, the rulers of that time not having permitted it to be printed in the kingdom? Sovereigns, after all this, chuse Jesuits, or Ex-Jesuits, for your confessors!

The bishop of Meaux supported the rights of the episcopacy in a matter, less weighty indeed than the preceding, yet not without difficulty. The chancellor Pontchartrain, a man honoured with the confidence of the king, and respected by the magistracy for his knowledge and probity, wished that the doctrinal works published by bishops should, like other books on religion, be submitted to the revision of a theological censor. Bossuet represented how indecent it was, that the productions of bishops, *judges born* of faith and doctrine, should require for their publication the imprimatur of a simple priest, to whom it belonged to learn from them what he ought to believe and teach. He in consequence obtained, though not without a struggle, the abolition of a rule so injurious to the prelatie dignity. Bossuet strongly supported his argument by the practice in councils, where the most profound learning of ecclesiastics of the second order gives them not the least right to establish

establish articles of faith ; “ and where
 “ the Holy Spirit,” said he, “ speaks only
 “ by the mouth of bishops, supplying,
 “ when necessary, by the plenitude of its
 “ own illumination, what may be wanting
 “ in theirs.”

NOTE IX.

IN the numerous and afflicting catalogue of great men whom envy has oppressed or calumniated, there are few whom she has lacerated in more sensible parts than the bishop of Meaux. It has been said, and a thousand times repeated, that the ardour he shewed in the dispute concerning Quietism proceeded only from jealousy of his respectable adversary. The friends of Fenelon, or rather the enemies of Bossuet, reported that the bishop of Meaux, while he attacked with such vehemence the Quietism of his brother-prelate, had in view to procure himself, by the splendour of a certain victory, either the archbi-

shopric of Cambray, if he could succeed so far as to get Fenelon declared sufficiently heretical to be deposed ; or the archbishopric of Paris, if, at least, he could send him back to his diocese. It was also said, that Madame de Maintenon, having asked the rector of Versailles, the great director of consciences at court, which appeared to him fittest to fill the see of Paris, the bishop of Meaux, or Noailles bishop of Chalons, who was likewise a competitor, the rector replied, that, of the two, he who would refuse it ought to be preferred, and that certainly the bishop of Chalons would not accept it. The bishop of Chalons, however, did accept it, after having, as is common in such cases, made resistance enough for the credit of his modesty ; and Bossuet felicitated him with a very good grace on this acceptance. In the long and violent dispute on Quietism, the makers of horoscopes were not always happy in their predictions. The spirit
with

with which Fenelon defended his book "Of the Maxims of the Saints," gave doubts that he would ever retract, and the following four lines were made to epigrammatise four bishops :

Quand le Tellier s'adoucir,
 Quand Bossuet s'humiliera,
 Quand Noailles gouvernera,
 Fenelon se retractera.

"When le Tellier shall become gentle,
 "when Bossuet shall become humble,
 "when Noailles shall govern, Fenelon
 "will retract." The prophet was wrong only in his last verse. The three prelates remained as they were, and Fenelon retracted. Amelot de la Houffaye, an author, it is true, much inclined to scandal, and therefore little worthy of credit, says, in his "Memoirs," that Fenelon, exiled by the intrigues of the bishop of Meaux, might have applied to himself the remark of Bartholomew Caranza, who, having by

his merit obtained the archbishopric of Toledo, to the prejudice of a number of competitors, was, by means of their calumnies accused before the Inquisition. This prelate, as he went to the prison of the Holy Office, said to the Officers who conducted him thither, " I go between
 " my best friend and my greatest enemy ;
 " my friend is my innocence, my enemy
 " my archbishopric, the object of the ambition of my adversaries." If Bossuet, however, was jealous of Fenelon, it must have been of his reputation, not of his fortune : glory touched him much more nearly than emolument.

He thought the faith interested in suppressing what he termed *the new heresy*, so much the more, as the famous female Quietist, Madame de Guyon, who had shaken the archbishop of Cambray, had seduced other persons about the court, among whom was the pious and austere duke de Chevreuse. This nobleman one day

day confessed to the bishop of Meaux, that when he was near this woman, (who, by the bye, was handsome and genteel,) he felt himself *stified* by the internal movements of grace ; and he ventured to ask the prelate, if he did not feel himself in the same situation ?

NOTE X.

MADAME DE SEVIGNE' speaks in the following manner concerning the *dragoon-mission*, in one of her letters :—" We have
 " nothing at present but *missionaries* :
 " every one thinks he has a mission, especially magistrates and governors of
 " provinces, *supported by a few dragoons*.
 " It is the *greatest and finest thing* that ever
 " was imagined and executed." We take too much pleasure in reading this lady's letters, to find in these few lines the eulogy of *dragoonades* ; and rather wish to believe that she meant to turn them into ridicule. It is, however, too true that they were no laughing

laughing matter, but rather objects of horror and indignation ; and France is perhaps the only country in which such execrable atrocities would have been treated with cold pleasantry.

The dragoonades are again mentioned by Madame de Sevigné, in a letter to Buffy Rabutin. " Father Bourdaloue," says she, " who has charming talents, and
 " a most amiable facility of disposition,
 " is going by the king's order to preach
 " at Montpellier, and in those provinces
 " where so many people have been converted *without knowing why*. Father
 " Bourdaloue will *teach them why*, and
 " will make very good Catholics of them.
 " The dragoons have hitherto been very
 " good missionaries ; the preachers who
 " are now to be sent will render the work
 " perfect. You must, doubtless, have
 " seen the edict by which the king re-
 " vokes that of Nantz : *nothing is so fine*
 " *as all it contains, and no king ever has*
 " *done,*

"done, or will do, any thing more memorable." This letter, at least as far as concerns the *dragoon-mission*, appears to be written in the same spirit as the former; for we cannot do Madame de Sevigné the injury to suppose that she seriously approved the plan of dragging by military force the Protestants to the mass and communion, before father Bourdaloue had obtained their consent to it. The inconsiderate praises which she gives to the revocation of the edict of Nantz cannot have had in view those absurd and cruel vexations, which must have excited Madame de Sevigné's tears for the deplorable consequences of this fatal measure, were her mind as enlightened by reflection as it was replenished with natural charms.

No one is now ignorant that the Jesuits, supported by Louvois, were the detestable authors of this odious persecution. Why then should the bishop of Meaux be charged with having been their accomplice?

plice? He had too much understanding not to know, that violence, far from giving birth to the faith, may indispose minds, irritated by their tyrants, against evidence itself; and that if the blood of the martyrs, according to a father of the church, was a seed of Christians, the blood of fanatics yields profelytes to error. Bossuet, therefore, never permitted himself to be accused of having counselled or approved those barbarous executions. Yet he was not ignorant of the secret imputations by which these pitiless adversaries of Protestantism sought to shift upon him all the hatred proceeding from vexations of which they were the promoters. It is asserted, that, in the public conference which he held with the minister Claude, the latter having spoken with a vigour which excited fears in Bossuet for the good cause, the artful enemies of the bishop of Meaux secretly employed all their credit in procuring permission for the minister to publish

lish the conference ;—so dear to them were the interests of religion !

We ought, however, to observe, that the Protestants have more than once opposed to the spirit of charity Bossuet professes in several parts of his works, a passage from his “ Politics drawn from the “ holy Scriptures,” asserting, that “ the “ king ought to employ his authority for “ the destruction of false religions in his “ states.” This was, at that period, the terrible, but general maxim of the French theologians ; a maxim, in fact, directly contrary to the protestations of Bossuet against the violence employed with regard to heretics. But as it is just to explain an author by himself, we shall have recourse to these very protestations to determine the sense in which he thought authority should act in the conversion of Protestants. We must either suppose this great prelate inconsistent and insincere, or believe that
he

he meant to allow authority only those methods equally mild and efficacious, which it may employ for the propagation of the faith, by facilitating, protecting, and encouraging the means of instruction, and by granting distinctions and recompenses to new converts, without inflicting penalties on the obstinate, or suffering any sort of vexation to be practised upon them, which is perhaps the surest mode of reclaiming them. It may, indeed, be asked, why this prelate, with all his credit at court and in the church, did not inspire this way of thinking into his episcopal brethren, the prince, and his ministers?—why, if he abhorred persecution, he did not declare against it with all the vigour and authority of his parts and eloquence? It may be presumed that Bossuet did make those representations upon this subject, that humanity, justice, and religion demanded from him; but that the detestable

able policy of the persecutors obviated the effect of his wise remonstrances *.

NOTE XI.

THE ridiculously scandalous thesis of which Bossuet complained to the king, seems to have had for its model a thesis fifty years older, and, if possible, still more scandalous. It was dedicated to cardinal Richelieu, and had for its motto "Quis ut Deus?" — Who is like to God? The answer to this query was *Richelius*; the nine letters of which word formed the beginning of the nine positions of the thesis.

In a small collection in two volumes, intitled "*Curiosités Historiques*," there is a journal of the last moments of Lewis XIII.

* This kind of apology sufficiently shews that the purpose of d'Alembert was really to throw a censure on the conduct of Bossuet upon this occasion.

TRANSL.

written

written by one of his valets de chambre, named Dubois, which is really *curious* from its simplicity. " This prince," says he, " being in the agonies of death, and " speechless, kept his hands crossed upon " his breast, and his eyes raised to heaven, " to which his prayers and vows were fervently addressed, denoting," adds the writer, " a great intercourse between *their* " *divine and human majesties.*" Hence it appears, that the valets of the king did not yield in adoration to the slaves of the minister.

NOTE XII.

It is well known that Lewis XIV. who, in his youth, sometimes danced in the theatrical exhibitions at court, renounced for ever the pleasure of this public display of himself, after hearing those verses in the tragedy of " Britannicus," where Nero is thus spoken of ;

Il excelle à conduire un char dans la carrière,
 A disputer des prix indignes de ses mains,
 A se donner lui-même en spectacle aux Romains.

The praise is his, to guide the rapid car
 Around the course, upon the public stage
 To gain unworthy prizes, and to give
Himself a spectacle to Roman eyes.

It was these lines alone which apprised the king of the indecorum he committed. None of his courtiers had dared to acquaint him with it, or, perhaps, had thought about it. This was then a truth which the prince learned at the theatre, and probably could not have learned elsewhere. This example and advice, however, did not prevent, fourscore years afterwards, the governor and preceptor of Lewis XV. from causing the young monarch to dance before his whole court, in the representation of the ballet of "the Elements;" and even from permitting the verses of the ballet to be printed with this title, "The Elements, a Ballet danced

“ by the King on the great Theatre of
 “ the Tuileries, 1721.” It was still more
 surprising, that the regent, who was then
 living, and could not be ignorant of the
 anecdote of Lewis XIV. and who likewise
 had a strong perception of the ridiculous,
 should have suffered this neglect of de-
 corum.

NOTE XIII.

THE imputation of Jansenism thrown
 upon the bishop of Meaux by father de la
 Chaize, was the more ill-judged, as this
 prelate had seriously employed himself in
 combating that strange heresy. He wrote
 to the nuns of Port-Royal a long letter
 concerning the signature of the formulary,
 in which he fruitlessly endeavoured to per-
 suade them, that they could not refuse the
 signature without hazarding their salvation.
 It is difficult to say what is most astonish-
 ing in this affair; the persecutions em-
 ployed against these poor nuns to force
 them

them to confess that five unintelligible propositions of school-divinity were contained in a Latin book which they could not read ; or the obstinacy with which they persisted to credit their Jansenist directors on that head, rather than the pope and bishops ; or the time thrown away by the great Bossuet in writing to these females, on a topic so little suited to them, and so unworthy of him.

Zealous and inflexible, however, as he was respecting what he thought the doctrine of the church, he was very indulgent with respect to his own particular opinions. One of his devotees had displayed considerable warmth against a work in which some sentiments of the bishop of Meaux, indifferent with regard to the dogmas of faith, were rudely attacked. He wrote to her in order to moderate her intolerance, and to convince her that on all points which do not touch the essentials of religion, opinion ought to be free. “ To be

“offended,” says he, “with contradiction on these subjects, is only a littleness of vanity.”

Notwithstanding the secret attacks upon him made by the society of Jesuits, he was connected, at least by reciprocal esteem, with some of its members. Yet he did not conceal his admiration of the “Provincial Letters,” that master-piece of ridicule and eloquence, which prepared the destruction of the society a century before it took place. Bossuet was accustomed to say, that this was the work which of all others he should wish to have written, had he not written his own. Both Jesuits and Jansenists, while endeavouring in vain to gain over this prelate to their party, rendered equal justice to the purity of his doctrine. Arnauld, having been told of a conference he was to hold on the love of God, pronounced “that it would be an excellent thing;” and Bossuet’s funeral oration was preached by a Jesuit.

NOTE XIV.

THE charge against Bossuet of having employed fraud in his work intituled "Exposition of the Catholic Doctrine," by an unfaithful representation of the doctrine of the Romish church, is best refuted by the approbations with which this book is almost overloaded. Who should better know the Catholic doctrine than so many popes and bishops who have bestowed the highest eulogies on the work? A singular kind of apology was made for it by the famous Richard Simon, who says that Bossuet only revived an old book of le Camus, bishop of Bellay, intituled, "L'avoisine-ment des Protestants vers l'Eglise Romaine;"—The drawing-near of the Protestants to the Church of Rome. This, however, is a work which nobody reads.

NOTE. XV.

IF this illustrious prelate allowed himself some very short and very infrequent relaxations, he studied to render even these useful to the church. He left translations into French verse of a great number of the psalms, which are said to have been formerly admired. It is not for us to appreciate their merit ; but although Parnassus should judge these sacred poems more severely than the Sorbonne, Bossuet was so great as an orator, that he might be permitted to be only a middling poet. In the last edition of his funeral orations, one of the pieces of verse he wrote for amusement is inserted. It is an ode on liberty, intitled " Liberty created, lost, renewed, " triumphant." The title is that of an orator, and the ode not that of a poet.

NOTE XVI.

AFTER all the praises we have justly bestowed upon this prelate, let us however venture upon a confession. The reputation of Bossuet, so brilliant in his own time, still so high in the church of France, in the schools of theology and among orators, seems to be somewhat diminished in the eyes of the rest of the nation. The reason of this must be sought in the difference of circumstances, and of character, between the two ages. In the preceding age, controversy was held in honour; the public, and even the courtiers, took an interest in it, and men of letters espoused one of the two parties. Theological disputes are now neglected and unknown. The numerous volumes of Bossuet, filled with works of this species, are at present, with regard to most of his readers, reduced to his "Universal History," his "Funeral Orations," and

perhaps a few of his Sermons. Thus the productions of this eloquent prelate have lost much of their ancient splendour; on the contrary, the works of Fenelon, filled and as it were penetrated in every page with those principles of beneficence, toleration, and charity, which interest all ranks, all nations, and all ages, have acquired many readers in an age which appears sensible of the whole merit of these virtues, and annexes a great esteem to useful studies, and a great contempt to scholastic disputes. This remarkable difference of taste and character between the age of Lewis XIV. and the present, not only influences the rank assigned in our days to most of our writers, but the judgment formed of the sovereigns by whom the nation has been governed. Henry IV. and Charles V. have acquired numerous partisans; while other monarchs, highly extolled during their lives, and in many respects worthy of being so, have

have sensibly sunk in the public opinion. A book has been written of "the different revolutions in the fortune of Aristotle:" another, equally interesting and philosophical, might be composed of the variations in the renown of sovereigns and authors. But as the time at length came, in which the idea formed of Aristotle was irrevocably fixed, so, sooner or later, a time comes in which the reputation of writers and kings is decided upon unalterably, and equitable posterity stamps their memory with an indelible seal of esteem or reprobation. To this posterity it belongs to pronounce in the final resort on the merit of Bossuet; to fix without appeal the rank he is to occupy among the few celebrated men who have astonished or enlightened their contemporaries; and finally to ascertain the right he may have acquired, either by his talents or his conduct, to the applause of the nation, and the gratitude of mankind.

EULOGY
OF
DESPREAUX*.

NICHOLAS BOILEAU DESPREAUX was born on November 1, 1636. His parents were Gilles Boileau, register of the Great Chamber, and Ann de Nielle, his second wife. His family was noble, and could trace back to the fourteenth century; whence he was used to say of Clermont Tonnerre, bishop of Noyon, in whose eyes nobility was the first of merits, "He would esteem me much more if he knew I was a gentleman." A great city and a small village, Paris and Crône, contend

* Though this eminent writer is usually known among us by his family-name of *Boileau*, yet as his countrymen have thought proper to distinguish him with greater accuracy by that of *Despreaux*, their authority has been followed on the present occasion.

TRANSL.

for the honour of his birth ; as formerly several Greek cities did for that of having been the cradle of Homer, whom they are said to have suffered to want bread during his life. The native place of Despreaux will one day become the object of an important controversy among the learned, and may probably, to apply one of our poet's verses,

“ Aux Saumaïses futurs préparer des tortures ;”

Breed tortures to Saumaïses yet unborn.

Paris and Crône each already cites in its favour weighty authorities, which we shall forbear discussing in this place, lest we should seem to have caught something of the Saumaïse. Men of a superior order are the property neither of the town, the village, nor the nation which boasts of them. Thrown at random and in small number on the surface of the earth, they are not so much the ornament, as the exception of the human species, which, in the rest of its individuals, seems to have been

been only sketched out by Nature, from whom it has received so much activity with so much impotence, and a comprehension so limited, with a curiosity so insatiable and presumptuous.

Despreaux, in his early years, was the reverse of those infantine prodigies who often in mature age scarcely attain to mediocrity; souls produced before their term, which nature exhausts herself in bringing to light, and then refuses to expand, as if conscious of inability to carry to perfection. This man, who was to act so great a part in literature, and assume so formidable a tone, appeared in his infancy heavy and taciturn; nor was his taciturnity of that observing kind which denotes sly mischief at the bottom, but the downright barren taciturnity of insipid good-nature. His father, on comparing him with his other children, used to say, "As for this, he is a good-tempered fellow who will never speak ill of any one." A father
must

must have supposed his child doomed to insuperable mediocrity, who could be content with so modest an eulogy. All the brothers of Despreaux displayed premature parts, and seemed to promise to be great men; he alone promised nothing, and was what they promised*.

Through compliance with the wishes of his family, he commenced with being a counsellor. The dryness of the Code and Digest soon disgusted him with this profession, which was a loss to the bar. Replenished with good taste and intelligence, he would have been a legislator on that great theatre, as he was upon Parnassus. He would have introduced genuine eloquence in a land where, even in our time, it is often little known, and where it was much less so a century ago. He would have given no quarter to that trivial rhetoric, which consists in drowning a heap of sophisms in a sea of unnecessary

* See NOTE I.

words and ridiculous figures. Despreaux did not conceal his opinion concerning those declamations which so frequently resound through the courts. One day, defending the cause of good taste before a grave magistrate, who thought himself as great a judge in literature as in law-cases, and perhaps was not much in the wrong, our illustrious poet praised Virgil for never saying too much. "I should not have thought," said the magistrate drily, "that this was so great a merit."—"So great," replied Despreaux, "that it is what all your harangues want."

The following anecdote will give an idea of his taste for the profession which his parents would have obliged him to follow. M. Dongois, his brother-in-law, register of parliament, took him to his house in order to form him to the style of business, the absurd barbarism of which must appear very revolting to a young man who had read Cicero and Demosthenes. M. Dongois

gois had a decree to draw up in an important cause. He composed it with enthusiasm, while he dictated it to Despreaux with an emphasis which shewed how much he was satisfied with the sublimity of his work. When he had finished, he bid his secretary read it; and as this secretary made no reply, Dongois perceived that he was fallen asleep, after having written but a few words. Transported with anger, he sent back Despreaux to his father, condoling with this unfortunate parent upon the stupidity of his son, who, he assured him, "would be nothing but a blockhead "all the rest of his life."

The young man passed from the intricacies of jurisprudence to the quibbles of scholastic divinity, the obscure and puerile subtlety of which science was still less suited to an understanding like his. He thus for some years struggled with nature, knocking at all the doors it had shut against him. At length he became what
he

he himself wished to be—a poet; and, as if to belie at setting out his father's prediction, he commenced with satire.

The dangerous kind of writing in which he displayed his talents produced its natural effect. It let loose against the author the crowd of writers whom he attacked; and gave him friends, or rather readers, among that very numerous class of the public, who, through an inconstancy cruelly rooted in the human heart, love to see those humbled whom even they esteem the most. But whatever favour and encouragement so general a disposition might promise Despreaux, he could not avoid meeting with censurers also in the very small class of men of worth or strictness who thought, as he himself has expressed it, “that evil-speaking is a sorry trade.” Of this number was the duke de Montausier, who valued himself upon an inflexible and rigorous virtue. “He rose every day,” he said, “with the in-

“tention of curbing satire; but,” he added, “after he had made his morning prayer, he felt his choler allayed.” Despreaux, however, did not chuse to rely upon the efficacy of this *prayer*, in order to shoot his shafts in security. It was of the greatest importance to him to gain over to his interest one of the first persons about court, whose credit was the more formidable, as it was supported by that personal consideration which is not always joined to it; since this is the result of the public esteem, whereas places alone can bestow credit. As a poet who knew the power of praise, or rather as a philosopher who knew mankind, the satirist slipped into one of his pieces a panegytical notice of the duke de Montausier; and all the severity of the courtly misanthrope yielded to this small grain of incense. This incense indeed was skilfully prepared to tickle the rugged modesty of the Cato whom Despreaux wished to please. The

verses

verses in which he pays his homage are few, and extremely flattering, without having too much the air of adulation.

Et plut au Ciel encor, pour couronner l'ouvrage,
Que Montausier voulût m'accorder son suffrage !
C'est a de tels lecteurs que j'offre mes écrits.

And would to Heav'n, to crown each fond desire,
Montausier's praise might justify my lyre !
Such are the readers whom my verse would please.

This praise was neither flat nor exaggerated. It might be heard without blushing by a man who affected equally to abhor satire and commendation; and it was in consequence of being kept within these proper limits, that it produced the desired effect. Encouraged by this first success, Despreaux lost no time in giving the final blow to the tottering austerity of his censurer, by confessing to him, with an air of contrition, how *humiliated* he felt himself at missing the friendship of "the worthiest man at court." From that

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moment,

moment, the worthiest man at court became the protector and apologist of the most caustic of all writers *.

Other persons, however, more mildly pious, and thence disposed to pardon every thing but satire, were less easy to gain over than the stoic of Versailles; and the poet underwent from them several reproaches for the attacks upon *his neighbour* so frequent in his works †. But the authors of these remonstrances had no credit at court, and Despreaux did not attend to their scruples.

He continued then to pursue his satirical career; but, happily for his fame, he did not confine himself to it. He perceived that the glory of crushing bad writers is both petty and obscure; that an author destined to oblivion drags his censor with him into the same tomb, whilst, on the contrary, every work really deserving of

* See NOTE II.

† See NOTE III.

success is sure of surviving the most ingenious satire, and even the justest criticism, because it is difficult to produce beauties, and easy to mark faults; and that, in order to reach posterity, it is not sufficient to supply some ephemeral food to the malignity of contemporaries, but it is requisite, as well in verse as in prose, to be the writer of all times and all places. Convinced of these truths, which are worthy of being meditated upon and adopted by all men of letters who understand true glory, and join worth to talents, Despreaux produced those works which will render his fame perpetual. He wrote his delightful "Epistles," in which, with delicate praises, he has intermixed precepts of literature and morality, delivered with the most striking truth, and the happiest precision; his "Lutrin," which, with so small a ground of matter, contains so much variety, action, and grace; and his "Art of Poetry," which is in our lan-

guage what that of Horace is in Latin—the code of good taste. It is even superior to that of Horace, not only in the necessary and perfect order which the French poet has given his work, and which the Latin poet seems to have neglected, but especially in the art with which Despreaux has rendered his verses examples of the kinds of beauty for which he has successively laid down rules: far different in this from those dry, and as it were dead preceptors, whose frozen lessons would tend only to kill genius, did genius deign to hear them, and who, compared to the genuine legislators of poetry, are like the schoolmen, compared to true philosophers; artists, or rather artisans, whose unlucky fate it is to chill all that they touch, and to wear away all that they polish.

We shall not enter into an examination whether the author of these master-pieces merits the title of a man of genius, which
he

he assumed without scruple; but which some late writers have refused him, perhaps unjustly; for is it not establishing a claim to this title, to have expressed in harmonious verse, full of strength and elegance, the oracles of reason and good taste; and especially to have been the first in discovering and developing, by the union of example to precept, the highly difficult art of French versification *? Before Despreaux, indeed, Malherbe had begun to detect the secret, but he had guessed it only in part, and had kept his knowledge for his own use; and Corneille, though he had written "Cinna" and "Polieuſte," had no other secret than his instinct, and when this abandoned him, was no longer Corneille. Despreaux had the rare merit, which can belong only to a superior genius, of forming by his lessons and productions the first school of poetry in France; and it may be added,

* See NOTE IV.

that of all the poets who have preceded or followed him, none was better calculated than himself to be the head of such a school. In fact, the severe and decided correctness which characterizes his works, renders them singularly fit to serve as a study for scholars in poetry. It is upon the verses of Despreaux that they ought to *model* their first essays, in order to form themselves in time to this necessary correctness; in the same manner as students in painting, for the purpose of acquiring precision and purity of design, ought to form themselves by figures which have an austere outline, and strongly marked muscles.

Despreaux, the founder and chief of the French poetic school, had in Racine a disciple who would have secured him immortality, even if he had not so well earned it by his own writings. Good judges have even asserted, that the pupil surpassed the master. This is a question which we shall
not

not pretend to determine. To fix the rank of great men belongs alone to one who has a right to take a seat among them. We shall only observe, that Despreaux, whether inferior or equal to his scholar, always preserved that ascendancy over him, which a blunt and downright self-love will ever assume over a timid and delicate self-love, such as that of Racine. The author of "Phædra" and of "Athalie" had always, either from deference or address, the complaisance to yield the first place to one who boasted of having been his master. Happy would it be for men of letters, for those at least whose talents give them real claims to the public esteem, could they feel, from the example of Racine and Despreaux, how much their mutual union may add to this esteem, and, on the contrary, what a loss of consideration and glory they may incur from mutual jealousy and hatred! The way to
 miss

miss the laurel that awaits them is to snatch at it with too much ardour.

Despreaux, it is true, had a merit with respect to his disciple, which in the eyes of the latter must have been of inestimable value—that of having early been sensible of Racine's excellence, or rather of what he promised to become; for it was not easy, in the author of the "Freres Ennemis," to discover that of "Andromache" and "Britannicus." Moliere, and he alone, shared this merit with Despreaux. Corneille had not been fortunate enough to guess it, since, after having read the "Alexander," he very honestly advised the author to write no more tragedies. Racine, happily for the theatre, for his own glory, and even for that of Corneille, gave credit to Moliere and Despreaux; for it would have been less honourable to the creator of French tragedy to have met with no rival, than with
one

one who was unable to efface him in the public opinion. The superiority of that genius who first opens a fair and noble track, is much less decided when he proceeds in it alone, than when others march along with him, without being able to go further, or to obtain any other glory than of having reached him. This equal partition between Corneille and Racine appears to have been awarded by Despreaux himself, who, notwithstanding his friendship for the latter, and the shafts he has launched against the former, has never expressly given to either of these two great men the exclusive possession of the tragic sceptre *.

However that were, Despreaux, doubtless perceiving in Racine's first essays the germ of what he was one day to become, felt how much care and culture it required to give it full expansion. "I have taught him," said he, "to make verses diffi-

* See NOTE V.

"cultly."

“cultly.” He had done better still, and perhaps more than he thought; he had taught him to make *easy* verses *with difficulty*; for it is that facility so delightful to the ear and the understanding, which is one of the principal charms on reading Racine. There is, however, another kind of merit in poetry, little less valuable than the severe and correct facility of Despreaux’s disciple, which is that kind of unchecked career and happy negligence, which seems to produce verses as it were spontaneously under the pen of the poet, like a series of fine harmonies under the hand of a musician who has preluded from fancy. Might it not be easy, from these principles, to compare with each other our three great masters in poetry, Despreaux, Racine, and Voltaire. I name the latter, although living*, for why should we deny ourselves the anticipated pleasure of seeing a

* This Eulogy was read at the public sitting of August 25, 1774.

great man in the place that posterity destines for him. Might one not say, in order to express their characteristic differences, that Despréaux very happily coins and forges his verses ; that Racine casts his in a kind of perfect mould, which discovers the hand of the artist, without preserving his impress ; and that Voltaire, suffering as it were his verses to flow at will as from their source, seems without art and study to speak his mother tongue ? Might it not be observed, that, on reading Despréaux, labour is supposed and felt ; that in Racine, it is supposed without being felt, because, that if on the one hand the constant facility obliterates the perception of labour, on the other, the constant perfection incessantly recalls its idea to the reader's mind ; and that, in Voltaire, labour is neither felt nor supposed, because the more negligent verses which occasionally escape him, excite an opinion that the fine verses which precede and follow have
cost

cost no more pains to the poet? Might it not in fine be added, if a comparison were sought in the master-pieces of the fine arts for these three great writers, that the manner of Despreaux, correct, firm, and nervous, is adequately represented by the statue of the *gladiator*; that of Racine, equally correct, but more soft and rounded, by the *Venus de Medicis*; and that of Voltaire, easy, genteel, and noble, by the *Apollo of Belvedere* * ?

To return to Despreaux.—He knew how to procure a still more powerful protection at court than the duke de Montausier's—that of Lewis XIV. himself. He lavished upon this monarch praises the more flattering, as they appeared dictated

* These comparisons are always more fanciful than accurate. In the present instance, it is evident that undue advantage is given in it to Voltaire, since the *Apollo* is certainly not less *correct* than the other two, but is rather a perfect union of their several excellencies. TRANSL.

by the public voice, and merely the sincere and warm expression of the nation's intoxication with respect to its king. To add value to his homage, the artful satirist had the address to make his advantage of the reputation of frankness he had acquired. It served as a passport to those applauses which the poet seemed to bestow in spite of his nature. The prince's delicacy, probably not extremely nice, was encouraged by the freedom with which his panegyrist immolated authors of credit, who indeed were not kings; and Chapelain paid for Lewis.

Despreaux was particularly attentive, while bestowing praises on all those whose interest might either support or injure him, to reserve the first place, beyond comparison, for the monarch. Among other instances, he valued himself, as upon a great stroke of policy, for having contrived to place *Monsieur*, the king's brother, by the side of the king himself, in
his

his verses, without hazard of wounding the jealousy of majesty ; and for having celebrated the conqueror of Cassel more feebly than the subduer of Flanders. The lines of which he boasted on this account are the following in his " Epistle to M. de Lamoignon :"

Un bruit court que le roi va tout reduire en poudre,
Et dans Valenciennes est entré comme un foudre ;
Que Cambrai, des François l'epouvantable écueil,
A vu tomber enfin ses murs & son orgueil ;
Que devant Saint-Omer, Nassau par sa défaite
De Philippe vainqueur rend la gloire complete.

Despreaux caused his friends to remark, that the two last verses, devoted to the praise of *Monsieur*, were in a less elevated tone than the four former, which contained that of the king *. Though in these lines he appeared only delighted to exhibit his art as a courtier, he might also have pointed out that of the poet, in the

* See NOTE VI.

degradation of tints. He might have made a merit of his attention, after the two *thundering* lines of the commencement, to lower his tone gently in the succeeding couplet, in order that the transit might not seem too hasty and marked, from the *pride* of the first verses to the *modesty* of the last. We know not whether we have been anticipated in this remark ; but we thought it would be more useful to point out, in this favourite passage of our author, those refinements of taste which he has passed over in silence, than those of adulation to which he has laid claim.

He had however the art, or more properly the merit, along with this inundation of praises, to convey some useful lessons to the sovereign. Lewis XIV. as yet young and greedy of renown, which he mistook for real glory, was making preparations for war with Holland. Colbert, who knew how fatal to the people is the most glorious war, wished to divert the

king from his design. He engaged Despreaux to second his persuasions, by addressing to Lewis his first Epistle, in which he proves that a king's true greatness consists in rendering his subjects happy, by securing them the blessings of peace. Every body has got by heart the fine verses in this Epistle relative to the emperor Titus.

Qui rendit de son joug l'univers amoureux,
Qu'on n'alla jamais voir sans revenir heureux,
Qui soupiroit le soir, si sa main fortunée
N'avoit par ses bienfaits signalé la journée.

Who made the world enamour'd of his sway,
Who sent no visitant unblest away,
Who sigh'd at eve if e'er he fail'd to read
Life's journal mark'd by some benignant deed.

The king caused these verses to be thrice read over to him, praised the Epistle highly, and—went to war *!

So

* The example of Titus, a martial prince, and whose boasted beneficence chiefly consisted in lavish donations,

So much attention to please the monarch, joined to such excellence, did not remain unrecompensed. Despreaux was loaded with the king's favour, admitted at court, and named, in conjunction with Racine, to write the history of the prince whom he appeared so eager to celebrate. The two poets seemed closely occupied in this work; they even read several passages of it to the king; but they abstained from giving any of it to the public, in the persuasion, that the history of sovereigns, even the most worthy of eulogy, cannot be written during their lives, without run-

donations, does not seem very happily chosen to inspire a young king with dislike of war, and attention to the solid maxims of government by which a nation is rendered prosperous. In fact, the short reign of that emperor offers as little real instruction to princes as most passages of history that can be selected; and his celebrated saying loses its value by its application,

TRANSL.

ning the risk either of losing reputation by flattery, or incurring hazard by truth. It was with repugnance that Despreaux had undertaken an office so little suited to his talents and his taste. " When I exercised," said he, " the trade of a satirist, which I understood pretty well, " I was overwhelmed with insults and " menaces ; and I am now dearly paid " for exercising that of historiographer, " which I do not understand at all."

Indeed, far from being dazzled by the favour he enjoyed, he rather felt it as an incumbrance. He often said, that the first sensation his fortune at court inspired in him was a feeling of melancholy. He thought the bounty of his sovereign purchased too dearly by the loss of liberty—a blessing so intrinsically valuable, which all the empty and fugitive enjoyments of vanity are unable to compensate in the eyes of the philosopher. Despreaux endeavoured by degrees to recover this darling liberty,

liberty, in proportion as age seemed to permit the attempt ; and for the last ten or twelve years of his life he entirely dropped his visits to court. " What should I do there ?" said he ; " I can praise no longer." He might, however, have found as much matter for his applauses as when he lavished them without the least reserve. The fair days of *Lewis the Great* were indeed no more ; days of tears and disasters had succeeded them ; and some years of an unfortunate war had caused France itself to forget threescore years of victories which had been so highly celebrated by Despreaux and a hundred others. But adversity, the true and only master of kings, had unfolded virtues in the monarch which a constant prosperity would have stifled ; and Lewis XIV. defeated on all sides, proposing to march, fight, and die at the head of his nobility, ready to sacrifice even his grandson to procure peace for his people, displaying

under misfortune a greatness of soul all his own, and the glory of which was not shared with his generals and ministers, was not less worthy of being sung by Despreaux, than Lewis XIV. on the banks of the Rhine, ordering the dangerous passage to a numerous army which he animated *by his looks* ; then too haughtily dictating peace at Nimeguen ; and finally uniting against him all Europe, irritated by his triumphs, and overwhelmed by the weight of his glory*.

Though Despreaux confided to no one but himself the care of praising his works, he has more than once confessed, that in every thing he had written there remained one weak point, *the heel of Achilles*, as he himself expressed it, which none of his enemies could discover. He never chose to explain himself further ; and his commentators (of whom he has already three or four, possessed of the true genius of

* See NOTE VII.

commenting) have exhausted themselves in reasonings worthy of them, to detect this weak point. More adequate judges of Despreaux have hit upon this *heel of Achilles*, in the *sentimental* faculty, of which he seems to have been destitute. Our illustrious writer, in this respect, wanted a kind of sense. For if the poet must possess a nice touch, and exact taste, in order to decide what he should seize and what reject; if imagination, which is to him like the sense of sight, must paint objects to his mental eye after the life, and cloathed with that brilliance of hue which is to animate his pictures; sensibility, like an exquisite scent, must search out, in the very substance of every thing offered to it, those fugitive, but delicious emotions, the sweet impression of which is perceptible to those souls alone which are worthy of the boon *. This latter sense

* This analogy between a poet's faculties and the bodily senses is very strained and defective; and the

sense might indeed be desired in Despreaux, but he is furnished with the others in so superior a degree, that the defective sense is scarcely missed. It is the less regretted, as the subjects on which he treats seem not to require it. I say that they *seem not to require it*, but am far from adding that they forbid its use. Sensibility, that gift of nature—precious or baneful shall I call it?—incessantly haunts, if I may so speak, those who have the good or ill fortune to be framed for the reception of its deep impressions. Equally inseparable from their existence with the air they breathe, it seizes, in spite of themselves, upon all their productions, penetrates them, gives them motion and life, and especially sheds over them that tender in-

comparison of sensibility, in particular, gives not the least idea of its operations. It may be also remarked, that if Despreaux was really deprived of this faculty, it could not be the “heel of Achilles” which he himself meant, since he would have been insensible of his defect. TRANSL.

terest

terest which renders the author beloved, and his heart still more admired than his genius. Is a striking example wanted to shew the difference produced by the presence and absence of sentiment in two performances?—The fable of Death and the Woodman has been versified by la Fontaine and Despreaux; let them be compared—sensibility breathes in every line of la Fontaine's fable; every line of Despreaux's appears withered by aridity.

This want of feeling totally annihilated, in the eyes of our great poet, the merit of Quinault, so interesting in its kind, and so apparent to the present age, which seems desirous of repaying this charming author for the injustice of his contemporaries; a melancholy and tardy recompence of abilities neglected or persecuted during life! Despreaux, in conjunction with Racine, undertook to write an opera, in which they proposed to eclipse this author, whom they despised, and to shew the facility

cility of a work of which they never spoke without disdain. Despreaux composed the prologue, which unfortunately no musician was able to set to music; Orpheus himself would have miscarried in the attempt. Our poet, notwithstanding, suffered it to appear, with a preface, in which are found assertions concerning musical expression, as strange as those of Pascal on poetical beauty; a striking lesson to the happiest geniuses, not to force their powers, and to be silent where they are ignorant. But the most singular passage in this preface is that with which it commences. We there read, that “ Mesdames de Montespan and de Thiange, wearied with the operas of M. Quinault, proposed to the king to find another lyric poet.” These ladies wearied with the operas of Quinault!—that is to say, out of patience with *Alceste*, *Alys*, *Thesee*, and *Proserpine*; for *Armida*, to their honour, did not yet exist. Here we may indeed

indeed apply the line in the *Metromanie*,

Voilà de vos arrêts, Messieurs les gens de gout !

Such, gentlemen of taste, are your decrees !

The alienation which Despreaux always testified for Quinault had a secret cause which the satirist could not forbear suffering to escape. When they were reconciled, or rather when Despreaux was reconciled with Quinault, (for the latter never bore malice,) Quinault sometimes went to see him ; on which Despreaux, with a sort of pleasant, honest testiness, used to say, " He has only made friends " with me, that he may come and talk " to me about his verses ; but he never " says a word to me of mine."

Despreaux had not the same complaint to make of la Fontaine. This *good creature* (let us preserve the amiable title Moliere conferred upon him) never mentioned to him his verses, of the charms and excellence of which he alone was ignorant.

norant. But why has Despreaux never named la Fontaine in his ? Why, even in his “ Art of Poetry,” where he has not disdained to speak of the madrigal and rondeau, has he not spoken a word of *the fable*, as if he had been afraid of being obliged to praise the admirable writer who has been the creator, among us, of this kind of composition, and is still incomparable in it, after the efforts of so many fabulists to approach him : a writer, whose sly simplicity, so keen and at the same time so true in its strokes, was well calculated to be felt and applauded by so excellent a judge as Despreaux, who has happily said,

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable :

The fair, the charming, is the true alone.

Despreaux, it is said, asserted that la Fontaine had invented nothing ; and that his simplicity was that of Rabelais and Marot.

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He forgot that Rabelais is not simple, and that he is characterised by a gaiety often proceeding to excess, and therefore far from that calm and gentle disposition which simplicity supposes; he forgot that the simplicity * of Marot resides in the antiquity of his language, that of la Fontaine in his soul; that the diction of the latter is so peculiarly his own, as to have been that of no other writer either before or after him; that in this poet more than in any other is to be found, to apply a charming verse of la Fontaine himself,

Cet heureux art

Qui cache ce qu'il est, & ressemble au hazard;

That happy art

Which lies conceal'd, and takes the form of chance;

* The words *simple* and *simplicity*, by which it has been necessary in this passage to render *naïf* and *naïveté*, by no means adequately express their meaning, which includes a kind of sly frankness, often the cover of an arch design. TRANSL.

and,

and, in fine, that if among the celebrated writers of the age of Lewis XIV. la Fontaine is not the greatest, he is at least the most singularly original, the most an object of despair to imitators, and, if we may so speak, the writer whom it would cost nature the most pains to reproduce *.

They who have reproached Despreaux with injustice towards Quinault and la Fontaine, have also accused him, but with much less reason, of want of justice towards Moliere. This imputation might be sufficiently refuted by the reply he had the courage to make to Lewis XIV. when asked by him what writer he thought the greatest genius? "Moliere, Sire," answered Despreaux without hesitation, and without any salvo for self-love, though undoubtedly he was not a man lightly to resign the throne to his rivals †. We may only be surprized, that in the satire ad-

* See NOTE VIII.

† See NOTE IX.

dressed to this great writer, he contents himself with asking him "where he finds rhyme?" It would have been more to the purpose to have asked him, where he found those master-pieces with which he had already enriched the scene when this satire was written, the *Ecole de Maris*, and *Ecole des Femmes*. It would have been still more worthy of Despreaux to have foreseen and discovered in these pieces, those which were to follow and almost eclipse them, the *Misanthrope*, the *Femmes Savantes*, the *Avare*, and especially the *Tartuffe*, that work which stands alone on the theatre, the utility of which ought to reconcile persons of true worth to public spectacles, and to which Lewis XIV. notwithstanding the clamours of interested hypocrisy, had the resolution to grant a protection, which is one of the most laudable actions of this monarch. Despreaux used to assert, that every half century, or even a much shorter period, would

would have occasion for a new comedy on this subject, in which public justice and public instruction are equally concerned. And, in truth, if the painter was worthy of his task, there would be no danger that the portraits should be too much alike, so changeable is the form of hypocrisy, audacious and enterprising when it thinks itself protected, supple and insidious when it fears detection, humble and crouching when it sees itself unmasked. But if every age abounds in Tartuffes, each has not a Moliere; and it is more difficult for nature in this point to produce painters than subjects. After these reflections, it may seem surprising that a topic of satire, so favourable and fertile, should have been neglected by Despreaux, who has treated others of much less importance. There is some probability that the superior merit of Moliere's comedy diverted him from a task so well suited to the exercise of his talent; it appears even that he re-

sisted the sollicitation of his friends in this matter. One of them, who loved a good table, and valued himself upon understanding it, knowing that the poet was employed upon a satire on *good living*, very seriously represented to him, that it was no proper subject for pleasantry. "Rather choose hypocrites," said he, with warmth, "you will have all honest people on your side; but as to good cheer, believe me, you had better not jest with it."

In the same piece addressed to Moliere on the difficulty of "finding rhyme," if the main subject is not quite worthy of the name prefixed, the details contain lessons of great utility. Two lines are particularly remarkable: speaking of a good writer, Despreaux says,

Et toujours mecontent de ce qu'il vient de faire,
Il plait a tout le monde, & ne sauroit se plaire.

Defects unseen the conscious writer teize,
And pleasing all, he fails himself to please.

" This," observed Moliere, " is one of
 " the most striking truths you ever ut-
 " tered." He spoke justly. The most
 deservedly admired writer would much
 surprize, and perhaps humiliate his most
 rancorous censurers, were he to act the
 rigid critic upon his own performances.
 How many weak parts would he point
 out, of which he is the sole confident,
 and which, to all other eyes, are a kind
 of mystery carefully concealed between his
 self-love and himself. An author ought
 never to shew himself more submissive to
 censure, than when his critic lays his finger
 upon one of these secret wounds, and
 makes him cry, " He has found me
 " out *."

Despreaux generally wrote his works
 in prose before he put them into verse †.
 Racine is said to have done the same with
 respect to his tragedies. The particular

* See NOTE X.

† See NOTE XI.

genius of these two great poets, in which were happily combined poetic fire and cool judgment, justified them in this slow and measured pace. But their example is not for all writers in verse. How many are there whose productions would be withered in the bud by this method? Let him whose tread is firm and sure, without being slow and heavy, pursue his course step by step; but let him who, by slackening his pace, would render it timid and tottering, dart forward precipitately in his career. The prudent slowness of Raphael would have enervated Tintoret; and the rapid progress of the author of the *Metamorphosis* would have been fatal to the *Eneid* *.

Despreaux,

* These metaphors and instances are little to the purpose in deciding the curious question started by the practice of Racine and Despreaux. The method of writing the thoughts first in prose would probably occur to none but a writer of French poetry, the

Despreaux, a man too great and too sincere to wish to appear what he was not, never affected to be a philosopher, even in the most harmless acceptance that can at this day be given to the word. Nevertheless we are indebted to him for a piece of pleasantry, which, dictated by the principles of good sense alone, has been no less useful to genuine philosophy, than his other works have been to good taste. This was a "Burlesque Decree" in favour of the university, against "a certain unknown person named Reason," who endeavoured to intrude into the schools. This stroke of wit prevented the effect of those steps which the partisans of the ar-

mechanical niceties of which may demand the author's whole attention to the point of verification, in order to make it perfect. But that *to think in prose* is incompatible with the daring vigour of language required in the higher kinds of poetry, may safely be affirmed. Neither satire nor tragedy, however, are of these kinds. TRANSL.

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cient philosophy were preparing to take in order to perpetuate its reign, and which might perhaps have had the misfortune to be punished by success ; so that the burlesque decree precluded a ridiculous one. The magistrates, happily for themselves, had then at their head, in the person of the first president de Lamoignon, a man of acute understanding, who was not alarmed by the progress of knowledge. They also recollected, with a salutary remorse, a decree issued too much in earnest fifty years before, and for which the appellation of *ridiculous* would be too mild, whereby it was forbidden, *on pain of death*, to teach any thing contrary to the *approved works* ; and these works were those of the peripatetic philosophy. A few laws of this nature would have sufficed to throw back the age of Lewis the Great to that of Lewis the Young, and to hurry into barbarism that multitude which

is ever prone to a relapse, if not upheld by strong supports.

The "Burlesque Decree" has been printed with the variations of the different editions, and these variations are very remarkable: they shew the suppressions which Despreaux was obliged to make at the first publication; such are the cautions necessary to be observed in meddling with accredited fooleries! In proportion as the author felt himself more accredited, and as this "person unknown, named Reason," whose rights he reclaimed, less feared the contest, he was less afraid of giving offence, and obliterated by degrees, in the successive editions of the "Burlesque Decree," the softenings and palliatives.

If Despreaux abandoned the ancients in point of philosophy, it is well known with what heat he defended their cause in matters of literature and taste. This contro-

versy,

verfy, which resembled a religious difpute
 by the bitterness and animofity of each
 party, has been repeated till it is become
 quite tiresome, and we fhall by no means
 attempt to revive it. We fhall confine
 ourfelves to a fingle reflection : this is,
 that Perrault and his partifans, folely oc-
 cupied in returning upon Despreaux, right
 or wrong, the ridicule they received from
 him, might perhaps, with a more sober
 judgment, and greater knowledge of
 mankind, have eafily found means to
 bring over, or at leaft appeafe their anta-
 gonift. Let us fuppofe that, in the very
 heat of this quarrel, Perrault had faid to
 Despreaux, “ Euripides is doubtlefs a
 “ great tragedian ; but, honeftly speak-
 “ ing, has not your friend Racine fur-
 “ paffed him ? Horace, Juvenal, and
 “ Perfius, were fatirifts of the firft order ;
 “ but are not you, M. Despreaux, fu-
 “ perior to each of them, fince you

“ unite all their excellencies *? Homer
 “ is the prince of poets; but give us an
 “ entire translation of the Iliad similar to
 “ some passages you have already trans-
 “ lated, and do you think that the French
 “ Iliad would then need to envy the
 “ Greek?” These questions would prob-
 ably have cooled Despreaux’s religious
 zeal for the ancients, which would have
 had an opponent in his self-love; and if
 Perrault had added, “ Do you not believe
 “ Lewis the Great to be superior to Au-
 “ gustus?” the devotion of the satirist
 might have been converted into apos-
 tacy †.

Excessive as this devotion appeared to
 our poet’s antagonists, he himself alleged
 that it was nothing compared to that of
 M. and Madame Dacier, who did not

* Alluding to what Despreaux says of himself in
 the inscription for his portrait. TRANSL.

† See NOTE XII.

scruple to make a kind of saints of all the great philosophers of paganism, and almost regarded Despreaux as a free-thinker or a heretic, because he was more moderate in his worship. It was not Madame Dacier's fault that even Sappho, the scandalous Sappho, failed of canonization with the rest; and when Despreaux modestly represented to her, that this Sappho, so unworthy of divine honours, had carried so far the irregularity of her morals as to violate nature and her sex by her shameful passions, Madame Dacier coolly replied, that "she had her enemies." Wearied out sometimes by the learned extravagances of this couple, so lavish of incense to all that had the honour of being ancient, and of contempt to all that had the misfortune of being modern, Despreaux would say to them, in his splenetic fits of frankness, "I give those people alone credit for parts, who have thoughts of their own, and whose merit is not confined to understanding the thoughts of others."

“ others.” He did not shew more favour to heavy and insipid translations of those master-pieces of antiquity which he so justly admired, and which Dacier, who pretended equal admiration of them, had so cruelly disfigured in our language. Hurt at seeing them so travestied and degraded, Despreaux applauded Madame de la Fayette’s witty comparison of a bad translator to a stupid footman, who, in carrying an interesting message, repeats his master’s words all wrong*.

Fontenelle, who was attached to Perrault, and who, besides, was persuaded that literature, like philosophy, ought to shake off the yoke of authority, and only through conviction subscribe to an admiration even of twenty centuries, had declared against the blind adoration of Pindar and Homer with a freedom which lost him the good-will of Despreaux. Yet, always moderate in his opinions, he readily

* See NOTE XIII.

confessed

confessed that Perrault had gone too far,
 and that his assertions could not be ad-
 mitted without restriction. Hence it was
 said of Fontenelle, that " he had been the
 " patriarch of a sect to which he did not
 " belong." But the inexorable Des-
 preaux, too much devoted to the ancients
 to allow of even lukewarmness on their
 account, could discern nothing less than
 their declared enemy in the friend of Per-
 rault. He treated him as the traveller
 does the cicada found among the grass-
 hoppers, whom he crushes without mercy,
 solely because he has the misfortune of be-
 ing in bad company. The poet seized the
 philosopher by his satires, for which the
 latter preserved a resentment against him
 to the end of his days, even when he had
 no more to fear for his reputation; for
 Fontenelle, who, through moderation or
 prudence, never revenged himself, and
 seldom complained, was still less apt to
 forget. Despreaux, it is true, treated him
 with

with injustice. He was not yet, indeed, the Fontenelle of the Academy of Sciences; he was even the author of those "Letters of the Chevalier d'Her--," which he wrote while yet at Rouen, his native city;—letters, where it seems to have been the business of wit to violate good taste; and of which it has been pleasantly said, that they shared with Fontenelle's other works, "like daughters by "the custom of Normandy:" yet the author of these was also that of "the Plurality of Worlds," of "the History "of Oracles," and especially of "Thetis "and Peleus," an opera, for which Quinault embraced him with tenderness, and exclaimed, "you shall be my successor." Despreaux might at least have treated Fontenelle as well as he had done Voiture, in whom the affectation of wit is perceived at every line. He had likewise given some premature praises to Benserade, of which he repented towards the close of life; and having

having written an epigram which he pronounced a bad one, he said he would bequeath it as a legacy to Benferade. But by placing together Voiture and Horace in one of his satires, and obstinately refusing to alter the passage, he persisted in his error, if the expression may be used, to final impenitence *.

Firm and unshaken in his attachments as he had shewn himself by the courage with which he fought for the ancients, he was not less devoted to the writers of the illustrious Society of Port-Royal, whose works have so greatly contributed to revive among us the study and taste of sound antiquity. The famous Arnauld, their chief, and almost their oracle, had especially a large share of his homage †. Yet his attachment to these writers, so estimable in many respects, did not so far blind him as to make him take part in the distressing quarrels to which they unhappily sacrificed

* See NOTE XIV.

† See NOTE XV.

their

their time and repose. On the subject of the disputes concerning *grace*, which then resounded throughout all France, he often exclaimed, "How great is God, and how senseless is mankind!" He confessed, however, that influenced by the example of so many persons who occupied themselves with these controversies of which they comprehended nothing, he also had a fancy to form an opinion on the subject; but that this fancy, thanks to the clearness of the matter in debate, had terminated in useless efforts; "inasmuch," said he, "that having sometimes gone to bed a Jansenist approaching to a Calvinist, I was surprised to awake a Molinist approaching to a Pelagian." He did not long fluctuate in this vague uncertainty; he presently went to bed only indifferent, and awaked only rational.

But if he was by no means inclined to become a martyr for the opinions of Arnauld, he was still less disposed to disavow him

him for a friend. He openly professed his friendship, even at court, under the eyes of the monarch who had exiled and proscribed this renowned doctor. A courtier told him in the king's antichamber, that this prince was causing accurate search to be made for Arnauld in order to put him into the Bastille. "The king," he replied, "is too fortunate, he will not find him." Lewis one day asked him, "What sort of a preacher is one le Tourneux? they say every body is running after him." — "Sire," replied Despreaux, your Majesty knows that people are always attracted by novelty. He is a preacher who preaches the gospel." Le Tourneux, the friend and disciple of Arnauld, was greatly attached to the opinions of Port-Royal; and it may be supposed that the enemies of this house, who professed to preach the gospel too, were not much obliged to Despreaux for an answer which, according to them, did so

little justice to their zeal. He carried his courage so far as to make a display of his attachment to Arnauld, even in presence of the Jesuits, the implacable foes of all that bore his name. He maintained, however, all the reserve his character would permit, with regard to this vindictive society, then highly powerful and dangerous; but his delicacy was not the result of love. He even suffered his secret aversion to escape, by some strokes against subaltern and little-known Jesuits; but he took great care to preserve connections with the most celebrated men of the order, especially with those most in credit, among whom it may be taken for granted that father de la Chaise was included. A letter from Despreaux to Racine, printed in several collections, curiously exhibits all the deference shewn by the courtly poet to this formidable Jesuit; his attention in going to read to him his epistle on "the Love of God," in order to prevent that displeasure

displeasure of the society of which he was apprehensive; the precaution he took of being accompanied in this visit by his brother, the doctor Boileau, as a guarantee of the purity of his doctrine and intentions; the applauses given by the doctor and poet to all that the father-confessor uttered; the attestation they obtained from him in favour of the epistle which they thus submitted to his profound judgment; the profusion of theological science with which the father treated them on the difference between *effective* and *affective* love, "which," said he, "ought by no means to be confounded;" and, in fine, the hearty laughter with which, if we may believe Despreaux, he heard the concluding lines of the epistle, which, nevertheless, contain little to laugh at; but it was so essential to the poet to put his judge in good humour, that he might well applaud himself for having made him laugh so cheaply.

Among the men of letters belonging to this society whom Despreaux saw occasionally and called his friends, we may distinguish father Bouhours, who, in one of his books, had frequently praised and quoted him. But as he had done the same honour to several middling writers, Despreaux thought himself very slightly obliged to him. "You have put me," said he, "in very bad company."

There were, however, from time to time, clouds in the political friendship between the Jesuits and Despreaux. Bourdaloue was offended with a song of the poet's, in which he thought his name brought into question; and he could not help saying, "If Despreaux puts me in his satires, I will put him in my sermons." Probably it would not have been in the sermon on the forgiveness of injuries.

Despreaux was in danger of meeting with a much more terrible enemy in the society

society than Bourdaloue. He was accused of having composed a satire in which the society in a body was severely treated. This work, sprung from the dust of some college, was attributed to Despreaux by father le Tellier, a better connoisseur in intrigue than verse, whose want of taste, however, did not diminish his credit. He was the more difficult to be undeceived, as he did not wish to be so, and only sought for a pretext to ruin Despreaux, whom he did not love. This is not the only instance in which men more formidable from their power than their understanding, have employed the base and cowardly method of injuring estimable writers, by attributing to them satires, which would have been better performances had they deigned to have written them, and to have employed the weapon of ridicule against potent malevolence—the only weapon of which it now stands in awe.

One of the reasons which rendered it difficult for Despreaux to obtain favour or justice from father le Tellier was, that this Jesuit, less accommodating than father de la Chaize, had never forgiven the poet his epistle on "the Love of God," which the society impolitically construed as an attack upon them; as if they were satirized by the precept of loving God *. But supposing, what our author always denied, that the Jesuits were really the object of this work, they might, without any great effort of a Christian spirit, have pardoned so slight an injury; for this epistle, cried up as it then was by all the enemies of these fathers, is one of his most indifferent performances; and if his intention in composing it was, as he said, to shew that subjects of religion might be treated in verse as happily as profane topics, the assertion would be still to be proved. Des-

* See NOTE XVI.

preaux has somewhere said, that he wrote this epistle during a Lent, in order to excite in himself sentiments of piety even while composing verses. One would rather imagine that he imposed on himself this task by way of mortification during so holy a season, for the production has greatly the air of a penitentiary work *.

The frequent strokes of satire in which Despreaux indulged himself against several members of the French Academy, long shut the doors of this society against him, which his rare talents ought sooner to have opened. At length the period of justice came, and he was admitted at the age of forty-eight, on July 3d, 1684. It must be confessed that the suffrages in his favour were not determined by equity alone. The protection with which the monarch honoured him silenced the resentment which his epigrams had left at the bottom of several hearts; and the

* See NOTE XVII.

offended academicians shewed themselves in this matter less authors than courtiers. Not a single black ball appeared against him. In his discourse on reception, he did not conceal the *surprise* so *extraordinary* and *unexpected* an honour excited in him, and he testified his gratitude to the monarch still more warmly than to his associates. It may readily be conceived that such a discourse was not greatly relished by the society; but, what is more surprising, it was but coldly received by the public, notwithstanding the satirical air which transpired through the customary compliments, and which would naturally gain it favour*.

Though of a frank and blunt disposition, Despreaux seldom carried with him into society the caustic humour of which his writings are accused. His conversation was mild, and, as he said, "without claws or talons." Well-known acts of

* See Note XVIII.

generosity,

generosity, and the relief he frequently granted to indigent families, have caused it to be said of him, that " he was cruel only in verse." Yet the disinterestedness he more than once displayed could not shelter him from the imputation of avarice; a calumny often proceeding from that class of men who know how to lose, but not to give, and who are ignorant that the want of economy, even with a beneficent temper, is a kind of theft from the unfortunate*.

Despreaux's respect for religion was pure and severe. If he has not, like a pious versifier in our days, made eight hundred epigrams against the infidels, he has at least suffered no occasion to escape him of rendering them ridiculous, especially those, who, incapable even of reasoning weakly, pretend to more incredulity than they possess, " and in whom," said he,

* See NOTE XIX.

“ error is still more a folly than it is a misfortune *.” In the practice of religion he displayed as much discernment, as in his attachment to the creed of his fathers. Plain and sincere in this practice as in all his other actions, he never alloyed it either with hypocrisy or vain scruple. He was always the avowed apologist of public spectacles, though Lewis XIV. had early ceased to attend upon them, and though Racine, as good a courtier as a Christian, had rigorously renounced them. Despreaux even wrote some pages in defence of the drama; a topic which has produced so many volumes for and against, but upon which nothing better will ever be said than the reply of a celebrated preacher to a lady, who asked him if she did any harm by going to the theatre:—
 “ Madam, it is for you to inform me in that point.”

* See NOTE XX.

Though

Though Despreaux preserved to his death the Christian sentiments with which he had been penetrated during life, he, however, finished the scene like a poet, and spoke in verse to his last moment. When he was asked what he thought of his condition, he answered in a line of Malherbe,

Je suis vaincu du temps, je cede à ses outrages;

Time is my victor, to his force I yield.

Just before he expired, he saw one of his friends enter the room, " Good day, " and adieu," said he coldly; " it will " be a long adieu." Racine, on his death-bed, had taken a more tender leave of *him*. " I look upon it as a happiness that I die before you," said this father of a family, who left a wife and six children.

Despreaux died of a dropsy in the breast, on March 11, 1711, and by his will left almost all his property to the poor. His funeral

funeral was attended by a very numerous company ; which gave a woman of the lower class occasion to say, " He had
 " many friends then ! yet they say that he
 " spoke ill of every body."

The reproach alluded to by this woman is that which chiefly presses upon his memory, and which was most urged against him when living. He undertook to exculpate himself in the discourse he prefixed to his satires, and the object of which is to justify literary satire. This apology has a thousand times been re-echoed, and a thousand voices have been raised against it. On this question it will ever be impossible to bring men of letters to an agreement, since two irreconcilable kinds of self-love will always be interested in it ; that of authors, which will not patiently submit to be offended ; and that of professed critics, eager to make use of the ready advantages which the trade of censure affords them. For (not to conceal the truth) the class of
 satirical

satirical writers will ever meet with encouragement of a kind fitted to favour the propagation of their species. At all times there has been a secret and general league of dunces against men of wit, and of mediocrity against superior talents ;— a kind of sub-division of the secret and more extensive confederacy of the poor against the rich, the little against the great, and the servant against the master. This league of dunces is, for the most part, composed of poltroons who have not the courage to strike, but who are always ready to applaud those whose bolder, but not stronger hand, dares to aim random blows at the objects of their envy. Satire, then, will ever be the talent of those who possess no other ; since, whether ingenious or gross, gay or sad, open or concealed, it will always give pain, and consequently always be read, and perhaps secretly protected. A writer of whom so little is required, finds his pen ready every

every instant to serve him ; and he may confidently say, on sitting down to his work,

Le style n'y fait rien,
 Pourvu qu'il soit mechant, il sera toujours bien.

To style 'tis needless to attend,
 Put gall enough, you gain your end.

We are far then from meaning peevishly to refuse either this resource to mediocrity, for it is just that every body should live ; or this trifling pleasure to the public, for it is just that every body should be amused ; but we would ask, modestly and without acrimony, whether, in countries where the press is not free, that is, where all ranks and conditions are not indiscriminately given up to censure and ridicule, it is more just to permit insult to be offered to an estimable writer who does honour to his nation, than to a man in power who degrades it ? whether it is necessary that criticism, the utility of which no one disputes,

putes, must be harsh and caustic in order
 to be serviceable? whether satire be not
 more apt to discourage and stifle abilities,
 than criticism to enlighten and strengthen
 them? whether a dozen fine lines of Des-
 preaux's "Art of Poetry" are not more
 useful to the progress of the art, than all
 those in which the names of Chapelain and
 Cotin are so frequently repeated? Finally,
 whether the public, even while amusing
 themselves with an outrageous criticism,
 usually esteem its author? and whether
 satire does not much more frequently
 bring contempt on him who makes it his
 profession, than upon him who undergoes
 and despises it? A peasant, says Boccacini,
 made his lord a present of a little chaff
 which he had with great pains separated
 from a bushel of corn: his lord blew
 away the chaff, and thus rewarded him
 for his labour. Despreaux has himself
 given us to understand what he thought
 of the trade of a satirist, when addressing
 " his

" his genius," (*son esprit*;) in the ninth satire, he says of his own verses,

A peine quelquefois je me force à les lire,
Pour plaire à quelque ami que charme le satire,
Qui me flatte peut-etre, & d'un souris moqueur,
Rit tout haut de l'Ouvrage, & tout bas de l'Auteur.

Rarely I bring the bashful lines to light,
Forced by some friend whom satire's strains delight,
Who sooths my pride, and, with a roguish glee,
Laughs at my work aloud, and low, at me.

By the last couplet he designated the abbé Furetiere, so well known by his caustic and malignant character, which finally occasioned his disgrace and ruin. When Despreaux read his first satire to this abbé, he perceived at every stroke a malicious smile on Furetiere's countenance, and the expression of a secret joy at the prospect of a host of enemies ready to fall on the author. " This is good," he cried, " but it will make a noise." Despreaux remarked this perfidious approbation,

probation, and perhaps it would have induced him to burn his satires, were it not almost impossible, notwithstanding reflections and examples, for a man to elude his natural temper and his destiny.

Though in the class of satirical writers he was one of the least unjust, yet he was far from being exempt from that kind of unfairness to which the profession is prone. He had always at hand, for the convenience of his satire, four or five different names, mostly of the same measure and rhyme, which he substituted to each other in his pieces, according as he was upon good or bad terms with the owners; and, unluckily, most of those who bore these names were very estimable persons*.

The greatest mischief produced by his satires (if that can be called a mischief which really injures no one) is their having given birth to a numerous swarm of

* See NOTE XXI.

wretched

wretched imitators, who, believing themselves heirs of his art, are not so even of his venom ; and who, to borrow a happy expression of Montagne's, " try to be worse men than they are able." Despreaux, were he to return among us, would blush at the dwarfish and deformed children who dare to call him father, and think to prove their descent by wearing some paltry shreds of his livery. Men who versify like Gaeon, and who judge as they write, have been seen to assume the post of legislators of Parnassus, where they would not be permitted to occupy the lowest ranks. To these unfortunate disciples, or rather apes, of a great man, might be applied what Saint-Pavin says very unjustly of their master :

S'il n'eut mal parlé de personne,
On n'eut jamais parlé de lui.

Had he spoken ill of no one, he would never have been spoken of.

For

For it is necessary to remark this difference between Despreaux and his unfortunate successors—a difference entirely to their disadvantage : He began with satires, and concluded with works that will be immortal ; they, on the contrary, began with contemptible works, and concluded with still more wretched satires. We shall add but two considerations, borrowed from Despreaux himself ; one may serve as an encouragement to those who are the objects of satire, the other as an useful piece of advice to those who exercise it. When he had given a new work to the public, and was told that the critics spoke very harshly of it ;—“ So much the better,” said he ; “ bad works are those of which nothing at all is spoken.” He then recollected the saying of an ancient philosopher, “ that genius would indeed be proud of its glory, could it hear the harmonious concert resulting from the clamours of envy.” On the

other hand, when it was represented to Despreaux, that if he attached himself to satire, he would acquire enemies who would keep a vigilant eye over his actions, for the purpose of decrying them; "Well then," he replied, "I will act like an honest man, and not fear them." He did so; and thus gave a most important lesson to all satirists. We shall not determine whether the lesson has been followed by those to whom it was so necessary; we shall only recommend it to the satirists with whom our age abounds, to consult their consciences on the subject.

NOTES
TO THE
EULOGY OF DESPREAUX.

NOTE I.

DESPREAUX had three brothers distinguished for wit ; *Boileau de Puimorin*, who will be mentioned in the sequel of this note ; *Giles Boileau*, to whom a particular note will be assigned ; and *James Boileau*, doctor of the Sorbonne, and canon of the Holy Chapel. This *James* is known by a great number of singular works, some of them by no means decent, which he wrote in Latin, “ for fear,” said he, “ lest the bishops should condemn them.” This doctor loved the Jesuits no better than his brother the poet

V 2

did ;

did; he defined them, " people who
 " lengthen the creed, and shorten the
 " decalogue." Several of his repartees
 and oddities are recorded. Arguing once
 in the Sorbonne against the maintainer of
 a thesis, under whose name a work had
 lately appeared of which he was not the
 author, he said to him publicly, " If you
 " had read your last book, you would
 " not support the opinion I attack."
 When reproached for the bad company
 he sometimes kept, he justified himself by
 observing that, " if it were necessary to
 " break with all reprobates, a man ran
 " the risk of living alone." As dean of
 the chapter of Sens, it fell to him to har-
 rangue the celebrated prince of Condé,
 as he once passed through that city. This
 great commander was fond of seeing ora-
 tors disconcerted in his presence; a plea-
 sure rather belonging to a prince than a
 hero. He affected to stare at the dean,
 with a countenance meant to put him out.

Boileau

Boileau perceived it, pretended to be disturbed; and thus began his discourse:
 “ Your highness need not be surprised at
 “ seeing me tremble before you, at the
 “ head of a company of priests; were I
 “ at the head of thirty thousand soldiers,
 “ I should tremble much more.” He
 had proved in a Latin work, written in
 his usual rugged and whimsical style, that
 ecclesiastics were as much forbidden to
 wear long as short habits; whence he ap-
 peared on foot in the streets, with an ec-
 clesiastical dress that was neither long nor
 short. He had written another book,
 intitled “ De Forma Christi,” (on the
 personal figure of Christ,) and he said,
 respecting this work, “ It is a ridiculous
 “ thing that so many visionaries who have
 “ taken upon them to comment scrip-
 “ ture, have applied to the Son of God
 “ this passage of I know not what pro-
 “ phet, ‘ the fairest among the sons of
 U 3 “ men;

" men ;" I prove in my work, as clear
 " as the day, that he was only a little
 " fellow like myself." Fond of appearing singular in every thing, as he was once disputing on a thesis of philosophy maintained at the college of Beauvais by the son of the protestant minister Claude, who enjoyed a high reputation in his sect, he gave to the father, who was present, the title of "*Illustrissimus Ecclesiæ Princeps*," as if he had spoken of a bishop. This excited great murmurs in the assembly, and the doctor was obliged to make a written retraction, which the Sorbonne printed. Such was the abbé Boileau, who, as appears above, had neither the language nor the decorum of his profession. He probably displayed early his rough disposition, since his father was used to say of him, " Jemmy will be nothing but a libertine." But he was mistaken with regard to the doctor as well as to the poet ;

poet ; for the abbé Boileau was always as regular in his morals, as he was free in his conversation and writings.

Puimorin, the third brother of Despreaux, but by a different mother, was also a man of wit, and besides very agreeable in the commerce of society ; but the love of pleasure detached him from literary pursuits. It was he who, upon being bitterly reproached by Chapelain with not knowing how to read, retorted, “ I know it “ but too well, since you have begun to “ print.” The death of Puimorin was occasioned by a circumstance equally melancholy and singular. Being once in a company of friends, they made an agreement that the first who died should come and acquaint the others of his condition. One of them dying soon after, Puimorin thought that he saw his apparition in the night, and was so much affected that he fell into a mortal disease.

We shall say nothing of another brother, *Jerom Baileau*, register of parliament, a great gamester, and a great blasphemer when he lost; the husband of a peevish, perverse woman, whom Despreaux has painted in several passages of his satire against women. The poet, however, went to live with her after the death of her husband; but she was not his wife.

Despreaux, whose infancy so little flattered the vanity of his relations, was very ill treated by them in his youth, especially by his brothers, who did not yet fear him, and who despised him too much to be jealous of him. The lodging appropriated to him in his father's house was a sort of lanthorn above the garret, whence he was afterwards brought down into the garret itself; which made him say that his fortune commenced with "a descent into the garret." He used to add, that if he had an offer of renewing his life on the condition

condition of passing again through the early part of his youth, he would prefer non-existence. Hence he was no believer in the common assertion, that childhood is the happiest period of life. "Can one," said this lover of independence, "consider otherwise than as a great misfortune, the perpetual vexation at this age of never having one's will?" It was to no purpose to represent to him the advantages of a constraint which prevents so many follies in early life. "What avails it," he replied, "to know the use of our chains when we have shaken them off, if we feel only their weight while we wear them?" It was not that Despreaux thought the other periods of life more agreeable than that of infancy: all appeared to him equally painful; youth for its tormenting passions, manhood for its consuming cares, old age for its oppressive infirmities; and he seemed not far from the opinion of that philosopher, who,

who, on being asked what was the happiest instant of life, replied, "the instant of quitting it."—"It would be difficult," Despreaux further remarked, "to point out the best season of life; one can only say, it is scarcely ever that which is passing while the question is asked."

The only amusement of Despreaux, so ill treated at home, was sometimes to go to the great hall of the court of justice, where he made the clerks merry with his pleasantries. Can it be believed that his enemies afterwards made a serious charge against him of this recreation?

NOTE II.

THE duke de Montausier was accustomed to express himself with great acrimony against satire; and said, with a severity almost ridiculous on so slight a subject, that "it should be sent to the gallies crowned with laurels." Such
was

was the punishment denounced by this stoical courtier against the rash poet who had been so audacious as to abuse Chaplain and Cotin, and to disregard the *protection* with which he honoured them. This nobleman's enmity to satire must have made a strong impression at court; for Despreaux, in one of his letters, felicitates himself greatly on the support he experienced in this matter from his friend Felix, first surgeon to the king. Expressing regret for his loss, he says, "He was
 " one of the first who bestowed applause on
 " my rising follies, and who took my part
 " at court against the duke de Montausier." Notwithstanding this declared aversion to satires, the duke had himself written satires in his youth; and his real or supposed talent for this kind of composition is the subject of part of the praise bestowed upon him by Menage, in a dedication prefixed to the collection of his poems.

NOTE III.

MADemoiselle DE LAMOIGNON, sister to the first president, whose virtue was simple, mild, and unaffected, never pardoned Despreaux for his epigrams and satires. "What!" said the poet to her, "would you not permit me to write a satire against the Grand Turk?"—"No," she replied, "he is a sovereign, and ought to be respected."—"But against the devil, at least," he rejoined. She was silent for a moment, hesitating between her religion and her disposition; at length she said, "One ought never to speak ill of any one." She displayed her indulgent simplicity on another occasion. The missionary, Nicholas Feuillet, canon of St. Cloud, famous for the austerity of the morals he preached, was inclined to corpulence, and had an air of rosy health which seemed at variance with the severity of his doctrine. Despreaux maliciously

maliciously lamented this contrast to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, who was very fond of the preacher: "Oh!" she replied, "I am told he is beginning to grow lean."

Despreaux loved to relate the following anecdote relative to his satirical profession. — A good priest to whom he was confessing himself asked him his employment. "I am a poet." — "A sad trade," said the priest; "but what kind of poet?" — "A satirist." — "Still worse! and against whom do you write satires?" — "Against the makers of operas and romances." — "Oh! as to that, it is all very well," replied the priest; and absolution followed. The confession was not very sincere, nor the absolution very fairly obtained; but the poet's conscience was satisfied; and had it required a better security, he might have found it in doctor Arnauld, who expressly undertook the apology of Despreaux's most violent satire,

tire, that against women. Arnould, indeed, underwent some reproach on this account, and was obliged to become the apologist of his apology. But Despreaux had bestowed many praises on this doctor, who was thereby, like the duke de Montausier, rendered indulgent with regard to satires of which others were the victims.

Though we attach less value to the satires of Despreaux than to his other works, we think it right, however, to render them a piece of justice which perhaps even the author's friends have not sufficiently paid: this is, that the poet never attacks bad taste and bad writers, but with the weapons of pleasantry; and never speaks of vice and wicked men, but with indignation. This difference in treating two different objects of satire, is a proof of the goodness of his heart, and the sincerity of his virtue.

NOTE IV.

WRITERS of great respectability have asserted that Despreaux was without poetic rage (*verve*). They ought to have defined this expression, which has been used by different writers in very different senses. Leaving to those who have the happiness of feeling it, and the talent of describing it, the determination of questions respecting its nature, we shall content ourselves with quoting the equitable and luminous judgment concerning this poet's merit, contained in a passage of a letter from Voltaire to the late Helvetius. " I agree
 " with you that Despreaux is not a sub-
 " lime poet ; but he has very well done
 " what he undertook to do. He is clear,
 " easy, happy in his expressions ; he sel-
 " dom rises, but he never falls ; nor in-
 " deed do his subjects admit of that ele-
 " vation of which yours are susceptible. . . .
 " I shall therefore never cease to recom-

“ mend to you that art of writing which
 “ he has taught so well, that respect for
 “ language, that regular train of ideas,
 “ that connection, that easy art with
 “ which he leads on his reader, that na-
 “ tural air which is the result of ge-
 “ nius.”

May we be permitted to add an observa-
 tion which still heightens the merit of
 our illustrious writer? We are acquainted
 with several well-informed men of letters,
 who having in their youth but moderately
 relished the works of Despreaux, esteem
 and love them more and more as they ad-
 vance in years. This is the natural and
 infallible effect of that fund of truth, rea-
 son, and good taste, which characterises
 the productions of this great poet, and
 which must give the greater pleasure to
 readers, the more reason and taste are per-
 fected in their minds. The same praise
 cannot be given to other versifiers, even of
 great fame; such as John-Baptist Rouf-
 seau,

seau, the idol of most young poets, who, as they grow older, become cool to his productions, because their principal merit consists in harmony, and the happy choice of words, which, great as it certainly is, addresses itself more to the delicate ear than the thinking head.

NOTE V.

Not only did Despreaux give Racine excellent advice respecting his tragedies; he gave him encouragement when their success did not correspond with his hopes. *Athaliah* was little relished when printed for the first time. Racine honestly believed that he had missed his subject, and confessed as much to Despreaux; who, on the contrary, maintained that he had never surpassed his *Athaliah*. "I know what I affirm," said he; "and the public will come about." The public has justified Despreaux, but not till sixty years had elapsed; and Racine died with-

out suspecting that the *Athaliah* was his master-piece, as Quinault did with respect to his *Armida*. Among other points of advice which Despreaux boasted of having given to Racine, was that of always making the second verse of a couplet before the first. This, according to him, was one of the greatest secrets in poetry for giving strength and meaning to verse. This advice, excellent in itself, is reducible to that simple rule, more known than practised among poets, of never weakening the first line by the second; a rule which is not even peculiar to poetry, since good sense should dictate to all writers, whether in verse or prose, that the effect of what has been said is destroyed by subsequent feebleness. Had Corneille followed this rule, he would not have spoiled his sublime "*Qu'il mourut.*" We will not affirm that Racine has always rigorously practised this precept; but we believe that Despreaux has never failed in it:—which is no small praise.

NOTE VI.

THE populace, less able courtiers than Despreaux, did not observe the same shades in the applauses they gave the king and his brother. When they returned together from the campaign in which Monsieur had conquered at Cassel, in all the places through which they passed, the people cried, "Long live the king, and "Monsieur who has gained the battle!" The king did not forget it, and Monsieur gained no more battles. Despreaux, who so much valued himself on his address in praising the king's brother "in a tone "somewhat lower" than the king, had been still more scrupulous with respect to the marshal de Luxembourg. In his ode on Namur is the following stanza, addressed to the enemies of France :

Loin le fermer de passage

A vos nombreux bataillons,

Luxembourg a du rivage

Reculé ses pavillons.

Quoi ! leur seul aspect vous glace ! &c.

" Tell me," says he in a letter to Racine,
 " if you think I ought to mention M. de
 " Luxembourg? You are not ignorant
 " how delicate our master is with respect
 " to those who are made sharers in his
 " praise." The eulogy of the marshal
 de Luxembourg in this place is, however,
 extremely modest, which probably gave
 the poet *courage* enough not to efface it.
 Doubtless, Racine, equally *courageous* with
 his friend in this conjuncture which ap-
 peared so delicate in their eyes, was of the
 same opinion. Our courtly poet was
 sometimes obliged, even in his praises of
 the king, to use indirect expressions, and
 almost palliatives, when the object of praise
 was equivocal. Thus, in the following
 verse of the epistle on the passage of the
 Rhine,

Se plaint de sa grandeur qui l'attache au rivage ;
 Laments the heighth that chains him to the bank ;

the author, with great art, eludes the re-
 proach that Lewis XIV. did not on this
 occasion put himself at the head of his
 troops,

troops, and was only a spectator of this famous passage, of which he might have been the leader with great glory and little danger.

It may be allowable here to quote an observation of a great king in our days, who *himself* commands his armies, and commands them *effectually*: "It ought not to be concealed, that war is made for kings, and not for their people; whence it is, at least, highly just that kings should share in its toils and dangers." Would it not be still better that, if possible, war should never be made for kings, were it even to cost warlike princes a little of that glory which their subjects could so well do without *?

* It is impossible to say more on this topic than our Cowper has done in a line and a half:

War is a game, which, were their people wise,
Kings should not play at.

TRANSL.

NOTE VII.

WHEN Despreaux had entirely retired from court, he expressed himself more freely on our triumphs. Writing to his friend Brossette, he says, "The prosperities of France cost the register dear; and, if things go on thus, I am much afraid that three-fourths of the kingdom will go to the alms-house crowned with laurels." In another letter he says, "I cannot enough admire the freedom of mind you and your brethren of the academy of Lyons preserve amid the misfortunes of the state; and I am delighted that you employ yourselves in discussions on the funerals of the ancients, rather than in celebrating the funeral of the public felicity, now long deceased in France. It may however be asserted, that there is as much philosophy at Paris as in your society; since not a week passes in which operas are not thrice exhibited to a great

“ great concourse of spectators, and never
 “ were there so many amusements, pro-
 “ menades, and public diversions.” The
 French gaiety and frivolity, here so well
 painted, went still further : epigrams and
 songs continually appeared against the king,
 his ministers, and generals, while people
 were crowding to the theatre of the Palais
 Royal to sing and applaud the old pro-
 logues of Quinault, which must appear
 somewhat strange after the battle of Blen-
 heim. We need not wonder, therefore,
 that, after all these disasters, Despreaux
 had no appetite for eulogy. La Motte,
 however, though much inferior as a poet,
 successfully ventured, in a full academy,
 upon what had deterred the intrepid pane-
 gyrist of the monarch. He celebrated
 the constancy of Lewis under his misfor-
 tunes ; and comprized his eulogy in the
 noble and happy thought, that, to display
 the whole of his great soul, “ le Ciel lui
 “ devoit des revers,” Heaven owed him
 a reverse of fortune.

NOTE VIII.

IN the social parties frequented by Despreaux and la Fontaine, where topics of literature were discussed, these two eminent writers were not always of the same opinion. They were disputing one day on the use of *aside speeches* in dramatic works. La Fontaine maintained that they violated probability ; Despreaux defended them by such reasons as he could find, good or bad. Seeing that his opponent did not yield, but grew still warmer in debate, he made no further answer but “ la Fontaine does not know what he is “ talking about—la Fontaine has not “ common sense.” La Fontaine continued to speak without hearing a word. At last Despreaux, in a fit of laughter, cried out, “ My friend, I have been abusing you here for an hour, and you have “ never perceived it ; can you now affirm “ that *aside speeches* are improbable ?

NOTE IX.

THEY who so unjustly reproach Despreaux with insensibility to the value of Moliere, have forgotten that noble eulogy to his memory in his seventh epistle, addressed to Racine; with which they who are not satisfied, must be difficult in praise. That line of the "Art of Poetry," in which Despreaux condemns Scapin's sack, has been quoted against him; but the succeeding line,

Je ne reconnois plus l'auteur du Misanthrope,
I lose the writer of the Misanthrope,

sufficiently testifies his esteem for Moliere. His criticism on Scapin only proves his aversion to farce, a kind of writing which Moliere himself did not value beyond its due. Despreaux's dislike of every thing ignoble, and especially of burlesque, escaped him even at court, during the height of the widow Scarron's (Madame de

de Maintenon's) credit. He said to the younger Racine, "Your father had the "weakness sometimes to laugh over "Virgil Travesti, but he took care I "should not know it." His high regard for Moliere was shewn on a thousand occasions. Lewis XIV. once asked him what modern authors had best succeeded in comedy? "I know of none but Moliere," he replied, "all the rest have "written only farces." Racine, who had quarrelled with Moliere, and was less just to him than Despreaux, reproached the latter with having been the only one who laughed at the first representation of "L'Avare" (the Miser). "I esteem you "too much," returned Despreaux, "not "to believe that you yourself laughed, at "least inwardly." The stanzas he sent to Moliere on the "Ecole des Femmes," (School for Wives,) though not first-rate, prove his approbation of that piece. His principle, however, of always giving an
ancient

ancient some advantage over a modern, made him assert that Terence was preferable to Moliere, from his judgment in knowing where to stop, and from not having, like him, disfigured his pieces with the jargon of peasants *. Such characters then must, apparently, be banished from the stage, since it would be difficult to introduce them without making them speak their proper language. Moliere, says Despreaux, without these spots,

Peut-etre de son art eut emporté le prix.

Might of his art have borne the prize away.

“ Who then,” exclaims Voltaire, “ shall have this prize, if it be with-held from Moliere ?”

* As Terence's plays are all translated from the Greek, and have their scene laid in that country, he could with no propriety introduce the Latin provincialisms, even had he been so inclined.

TRANSL.

NOTE X.

“ WHEN I read you my works,” said Despreaux to a Mæcenas, who thought himself a great critic, “ it is not your criticisms that I fear, but my own.” Another amateur once complained to him, that he did not understand some passages in his works: “ That is not my fault,” retorted the poet. Yet although he employed the greatest care about his verses, so as to have been years, it is said, in making some of them, and even in finding a rhyme; and though, in order to justify his slowness in publishing, he often repeated, “ the public shall not be informed of the time I have taken;” he was not fond of being told that his verses were the product of labour. He even satirized a magistrate who had ventured to make this observation, but without directly applying it as a reproach. Despreaux was soon sensible of the injustice into which too nice a self-

self-love had led him in this case, and he effaced the satire in the subsequent editions. But while he practised the precept he gave, " if I write four words, I expunge three," he did not imitate other poets, who often make more changes than corrections : this dry labour of severe correction, often fatal to other works, only added new beauties to his ; and he could not be reproached, like many pretended masters, with having employed the *plane* till all the substance of his pieces was abraded. Despreaux's friend Chapelle used, with more wit than truth, to express the toilsome exactness with which he finished his verses, by saying, " You are an ox who makes his furrow well." If Despreaux was so difficult respecting his own works, it may be supposed that he was not more indulgent towards those of others. He even criticised with a degree of courage incredible in a courtier. Lewis XIV. one day shewed him some verses which he had been making,

ing, and asked the poet his opinion of them. "Sire," replied Despreaux, "no-thing is impossible to your majesty; you wished to make bad verses, and you have succeeded." We might in this place examine an assertion of Despreaux, which has more than once been repeated by others, "that the great merit of poetry is to express small things with dignity;" but this discussion would carry us too far. Suffice it to say, that when the poet, from the nature of his subject, is obliged to express common things, he ought, without doubt, to do it in a dignified manner; but that his real merit is to express nobly things worth the pains.

NOTE XI.

IN Despreaux's Works (ed. 1747, tom. v.) is printed the satire, "A son Esprit," (to his Genius,) written by him in prose, and beneath it, is printed the same in verse. This comparison of the picture with its
sketch

sketch may be of great use to young writers ; and this is one of the services that the *commentators* on our poet, who are numerous, have rendered to literature. One of the latest has had the unfortunate patience to collect all the former ones, and bury the author's small volume under a heap of notes in five large volumes, which might be called a *Despreaux Variorum*. In this mass of rubbish are contained even the very middling Latin verses which Despreaux wrote in his youth. He soon renounced this futile employment, and chose rather to be the rival of Horace in French, than his ape in a dead language. He had little esteem for the Latinists of our days ; and had even composed a dialogue on this subject between Horace and some modern Latin poets ; but he suppressed this dialogue in his lifetime, through regard for two or three collegians who had taken the trouble of putting into Latin verse his Ode on Namur. More than one man of letters
had

had done the same honour to other pieces of Despreaux. A professor of the university, since rector of St. Côme in Paris, even translated almost all his works into Latin verse. The approver of this translation, printed forty years ago, and now almost forgotten, assures us that Despreaux honoured it with his favour, “not
 “ being able to deny that the Latin expressions often gave a strength and
 “ beauty to his thoughts which they had
 “ not in the original.” The dialogue above mentioned gives us great reason to doubt of the sincerity of the compliment; for it appears in many parts of Despreaux’s letters to Brossette, what he thought of modern Latin poetry. “ You know,” says he, “ that I set but a slight value
 “ upon it, prepossessed as I am with an
 “ opinion of the impossibility of writing
 “ well in any language but one’s own. . . .
 “ It is a strange undertaking to write in
 “ a foreign tongue, when we have not
 “ conversed

“ conversed with the natives of the coun-
 “ try ; and I am persuaded that if Te-
 “ rence and Cicero were to return to the
 “ world, they would heartily laugh at
 “ the Latin works of such as Fernel, San-
 “ azzaro, and Muret. The Latin
 “ verses you have sent appear to me wor-
 “ thy of Vida and Buchanan, but not of
 “ Horace and Virgil ; for how should
 “ we equal these great men in a language
 “ of the pronunciation of which we are
 “ ignorant * ?”

Amid

* The question concerning the value of modern
 Latin poetry, which the principal French writers,
 commonly but superficial classic scholars, seem to
 have agreed in determining on the negative side, has
 for a contrary reason, been differently decided by the
 most eminent literary characters in England. Yet
 surely, prejudice apart, good sense and good taste
 must finally concur in condemning a waste of effort
 upon attempts to do that in a dead and foreign
 language, very imperfectly and unsatisfactorily,
 which, in a living and native one, may be done so as
 to give universal pleasure, and challenge unequivocal

Amid the trash heaped together by the commentators of Despreaux, students of literature may be usefully employed in noticing the variations of those passages which the author has corrected. Nothing is better calculated to form the taste, than attempting to detect, in the corrections of a great writer, the motives of those decrees which he has pronounced against himself. Another useful service done in the notes is, the care taken to quote those passages in

applause. It is remarkable, that they who have spoken the most warmly in favour of modern attempts in Latin versification, have widely differed in their opinion as to the merit of particular performances; thereby testifying that there exists no positive criterion of its excellence to a modern ear and judgment. That some of our best poets in their vernacular tongue, should also have distinguished themselves in the composition of Latin verse, was a natural consequence of our established modes of education; but it may be safely affirmed, that the general reputation of an English writer, in verse or in prose, will never be taken from his Latin exercises. TRANSL.

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the ancients which Despreaux has translated, generally with great success. Far from being ashamed of these thefts, he was accustomed to defy his critics to steal in the same manner.

NOTE XII.

THE extravagance of father Hardouin is well known, who asserted, that the greater number of the master-pieces of ancient Rome were made by monks of the thirteenth century. "I know not how
 " that may be," said Despreaux, " but
 " though I am not extraordinarily fond of
 " monks, I should have been well pleased
 " to have lived with brother Tibullus,
 " brother Juvenal, Dom Virgil, Dom Cicero, and the rest." He used also to affirm, that it was he who had in a great measure brought Horace into reputation. "Before my time," said he, " his odes
 " alone were talked of. I read his satires
 " and epistles, and finding them full of
 " beauties,

“ beauties, I set about writing in the same
 “ way. Every body then had an inclina-
 “ tion to read their Horace over again ;
 “ and this was the cause of the quick sale
 “ of Dacier’s, who was unable, with all his
 “ efforts, entirely to spoil the original *.”

NOTE XIII.

AMONG the most esteemed works of Despreaux, there is one of which we have not spoken in his eulogy, because the matter is not his, and moreover, it is written in prose. This is his translation of Longinus’s “ Treatise on the Sublime.” Our poet’s enemies have censured it for mistakes in the author’s meaning ; a criticism

* If this boast of Despreaux is true, it must give a strange idea of the levity of the French nation, which could be so long in acquiring a relish for pieces so distinguished for good sense and agreeable morality. But his *every body* probably only included the superficial wits and fashionable amateurs of the day.

TRANSL.
 perhaps

perhaps hazarded without sufficient proof. But they ought to have added, had they meant to be just, that the work is read with much profit and pleasure, as well on account of the merit of the original, which contains excellent precepts of eloquence, as of that of the translation, written with purity and correctness, though somewhat deficient in grace and elegance. It is rendered particularly valuable, by the translations which Despreaux has given in very fine verse of passages in Homer and other Greek poets, quoted by Longinus; and likewise by the notes added to the version, most of which contain the soundest decisions in matters of taste, and the purest principles of literature. It were only to be wished that Despreaux, who often has justice on his side in repelling the attacks made by Charles Perrault upon Homer and Pindar, had not determined to justify these two great poets in every thing, but had honestly confessed that they were sometimes in the wrong.

NOTE XIV.

THE decided and unchanging taste which Despreaux shewed for the works of Voiture is unaccountable to those who adopt his other judgments on authors. They endeavour to excuse him by calling it a juvenile error, and saying, that his aversion to the tumid and declamatory style of Balzac had caused him to lean too far towards its opposite. But if he was an enemy to inflation, he was no less so to the affectation of wit; and he is accused of never having retracted the praises he had lavished upon an author so guilty of this fault. He seems, however, at length to have felt some remorse on this account. In the last of his pieces, on the "Equivoque," he has a couplet on Voiture's "cold play of words, which is no longer "admired;" but at the same time he calls him a "charming" author, and regrets the injury done by this "insipid ornament to his "divine works." This half retraction

tation satisfied neither his enemies nor his friends, who thought good taste violated by his exaggerated praises of Voiture.

NOTE XV.

HE strongly expressed his esteem for Arnauld by his free and somewhat harsh reply to father Mallebranche, who, speaking to him concerning his dispute with that doctor on ideas, asserted that his antagonist had never understood him. "Ah! father," said Despreaux, "who then do you suppose should understand you?" With a little more information, and a little less prepossession for his friend, Despreaux would have confessed, that in this warm, but empty dispute, neither of the doughty metaphysicians understood each other.

Despreaux's affection for the Port-Royal extended even to the nuns who inhabited this monastery, where they led a life of the greatest hardship and mortification. When it was told him that the king was violently

irritated at the resistance made by these poor nuns to the signature of the too famous Bull, and that he meant to treat them with the greatest rigour, "How," replied he, "will the king contrive to treat them more hardly than they treat themselves?"

NOTE XVI.

AT the appearance of Despreaux's "Epistle on the Love of God," which the Jesuits were weak enough to take as an attack upon themselves, one of the members of the society wrote an epigram, in which he limited the poet's merit to that of copying the ancients; it ended with the farcastic stroke, that, "for the love of Despreaux, it were to be wished that Horace had written on the love of God." Despreaux replied by another epigram, in which he assured the Jesuits that he had taken his epistle on the love of God, neither from Horace, nor from the

the writings of the Society. These reciprocal attacks ; the epithet of " devouring " wolves," by which Despreaux had clearly enough marked out the Jesuits, in his epitaph on doctor Arnauld ; the mixture of sweet and sour with which these fathers expressed themselves concerning Despreaux, in their journal ; his eulogy, on all occasions, of the " Provincial Letters," which he celebrated as the best-written work in the French language ; — all these indirect strokes given and received on each side, maintained between the poet and the society a smothered dissension, which would have ended in open war, had not the society as much dreaded the sarcasms of the poet, as the poet could fear the credit of the society. Towards the close of his life, Despreaux, wearied with quarrels, and desirous only of tranquillity, made his peace with the Jesuits, great and small, without exception. He wrote to Brossette, " You may
 " assure

“ assure the Jesuits of Lyons, that I shall
 “ not henceforth write against any indi-
 “ vidual of their society, in which, though
 “ greatly attached to the memory of
 “ M. Arnauld, I have always had illus-
 “ trious friends.” In another letter he
 says, “ I have without difficulty agreed
 “ to a reconciliation with the journalists
 “ of Trevoux :”

Aujourd'hui vieux lion, je suis doux & traitable.

An aged lion now, I'm tame and mild.

The journalists were not so faithful to the
 treaty as the poet; and continued to
 launch frequent and disguised shafts against
 him, of which, for the sake of repose, he
 chose to remain ignorant.

He had sometimes smart conversations
 with Bourdaloue. This father making
 one day in his presence some trite jokes
 that favoured of the monk and priest, on
 the proverbial madness of poets, Despreaux
 replied, “ I well know, father, all the wit
 “ that

" that has been uttered on this subject;
 " but if you will come with me to the
 " mad-house, I will engage to find you
 " ten preachers for one poet; and you
 " will see at all the cells nothing but
 " hands coming out of the windows,
 " dividing their discourses into three
 " heads."

Our poet's dislike for Jesuits extended
 itself to monks in general, whom he did
 not spare on occasion. Passing by Ci-
 teaux, he was very well received by the
 inhabitants of this rich abbey, who shewed
 him the whole convent. One of them re-
 quested him to shew them the place where,
 according to his "*Lutrin*," *Mollesse* (lux-
 urious indolence) had her lodging. "Shew
 " it me yourselves, my good fathers,"
 said he, " for you keep her carefully
 " locked up."

NOTE XVII.

DESPREAU, like many other authors, had the greatest paternal fondness for some of his least estimable works. Besides the tiresome epistle "on the Love of God," now read by Jansenists alone, he had a particular affection for that languid child of his old age, the satire on the "Equivoque." In this piece, also, the morality of the Jesuits was indirectly attacked; and these fathers having by their solicitations obtained a prohibition from the king of its being inserted in the new edition Despreaux was preparing of his works, he rather chose to relinquish the edition than deprive it of such an ornament. He was scarcely less partial to his "Satire on Women," which criticism and taste are far from ranking among his best performances. It is said that this satire was the offspring of chagrin on the occasion of his being robbed of a mistress
in

in his youth by a *mousquetaire*; though the younger Racine asserts, that an accident in his childhood had for ever precluded in him any thoughts of love or marriage. In this piece he was incautious enough to say, speaking of virtuous and respectable women,

Dans Paris, il est vrai, si je fais bien compter,
Il en est jusqu'à trois que je pourrois citer.

In Paris, if I know to reckon well,
The names of three, perhaps, the muse might tell.

He added, "in strictness, perhaps, there
"may be more." He took great care, however, to place Madame de Maintenon at the head of these three female prodigies, leaving the two others to be guessed at. But notwithstanding the measures he had taken to secure for his work a protection so powerful, the outcry against this satire was so violent and general, that, injured as he was to criticism and abuse, he was almost disheartened by the shafts that fell
upon

upon him from all quarters. Racine did his utmost to console him. "Take courage," said he, "you have attacked a very numerous body which consists only of tongues, and the storm will pass over." It did so, but the succeeding calm has not restored the work; and the "Satire against Women" retains, if we may so express it, the *scars* of the violence it underwent at its first appearance.

Racine had caused him to expunge from this satire a score of verses, well written indeed, but disgusting from the picture they contained of the wife of the lieutenant-criminal Tardieu, celebrated, as well as her husband, for scandalous avarice. After Racine's death, paternal affection restored the verses. But if the satirical strokes against women in this piece are not always delicate, and in the best taste, the work at least affords a proof of moral strictness not usual in a poet. A philosopher on his death-bed felicitated himself

himself for never having thrown ridicule "on the smallest virtue;" and Despreaux, "for never having offended morals."—"Happy," says the younger Racine, "could he have added—nor individuals." This laudable severity of morals, in his life and writings, has given him the surname of the *chaste*, a praise which he shares with Virgil.

NOTE XVIII.

LEWIS XIV. had laid down to himself a rule, highly worthy of him, and important to the freedom of elections;—never to dictate to the Academy the members they were to choose. He wished them, however, to cast their eyes on Despreaux; but he abstained from declaring it. Despreaux was a competitor with la Fontaine, whose rare talents and good-nature gained him a majority of votes. The king delayed his approbation of the election of la Fontaine, apparently from scruples occasioned by

his obscene "Tales," but really because he would have been better pleased had they elected Despreaux. The Academy, who guessed the true motives of the monarch's scruples, nominated Despreaux soon after ; and the king, fully approving his election, consented also to that of la Fontaine *.

NOTE XIX.

AFTER the death of Colbert, the pension which he had caused to be given to Corneille was suppressed, though this great man was poor, old, sickly, and dying. Despreaux flew to the king to prevail upon him to restore the pension. He offered to sacrifice his own, as he could not, he said, without blushing, receive a pension from his majesty, while a man like Corneille

* This story clearly shews the effect of mixing the concerns of literature with the interests of a court. A *Royal Academy* or *Society* can never be a really independent one. TRANSL.

was deprived of one. The king sent two hundred louis to Corneille, which were taken to him by a relation of Despreaux. The Jesuits deny that this act of beneficence was performed by the poet, and attribute it to father de la Chaise; but they alone do this honour to their associate. The testimony of Boursault, who relates the fact in his letters, and yet did not love Despreaux, suffices to refute them.

Our poet's disinterestedness with regard to Patru, whose library he purchased, leaving him the use of it as long as he lived, is well known. His enemies have reproached him with having spoiled this act of generosity by the following epigram :

Je l'assistai dans l'indigence;
 Il ne me rendit jamais rien ;
 Mais quoiqu'il me dût tout son bien,
 Sans peine il souffroit ma presence :
 O la rare reconnoissance !

“ I assisted him in his indigence ; he never repaid
 “ my favours ; but though he was indebted to me
 “ for all he possessed, he could endure my presence :—What an uncommon instance of gratitude ! ”

This epigram is only a stroke against ingratitude in general, and does not regard Patru, whose friend Despreaux continued to be, after he had laid him under obligations *.

On another occasion, Despreaux refunded all the revenues of a benefice he had possessed eight years, because he had not fulfilled its duties. This sacrifice, it is true, denotes scrupulousness as much as disinterestedness; but a miser would not have such scruples.

* It is, perhaps, rather a thought, and a just one, on the constraint often prevailing in the intercourse between the benefactor and the obliged person; and the exclamation with which it concludes is meant as real praise. It is to be remarked, that the epigram was not written till after Patru's death, and that his name does not appear in its title, though probably the poet had him in view. TRANSL.

NOTE XX.

DESPREAUX's respect for religion went further (which is saying a great deal) than his respect for the ancients. In order to justify a line against Socrates in his satire on the " Equivoque," which was near costing him the friendship of Monsieur and Madame Dacier, he said he could find no greater victim to offer up to Christianity, than the hero of pagan philosophy *. His writings every where display the pious sentiments with which he was animated. He had a particular aversion to those men who, as he said, " imagine they do not " believe in God, and are made for the " belief of apparitions and legends ;" who, in a word, affecting incredulity ra-

* The line is, indeed, a most malignant one; and the notion of immolating the moral character of a pagan philosopher to the cause of Christianity, seems to breathe little of the spirit of the Christian religion.

TRANSL.

ther through vanity than conviction, deserve the ridicule even of those who entertain the same incredulity from principle. Yet, in his attempts to make pretended freethinkers ridiculous, it has happened to Despreaux, either through fatality or poetical inattention, to place their impieties in a kind of equivocal light, which might have rendered his sincerity suspected, if it could have been so. Thus, in speaking of Arianism, he says, addressing himself to the " Equivoque,"

Tu fis dans une guerre & si triste & si longue,
Perir tant de Chrétiens, martyrs d'une diphthonge.

By thee, the martyrs to a diphthong's right,
Whole hosts of Christians fell in cruel fight.

It is well known that, in fact, two words differing only in a diphthong, but to which the church attached two very different meanings, were the foundation of the whole dispute between the Arians and Catholics. Despreaux felt that the expression

" martyrs

“ martyrs to a diphthong” seemed to throw an equal ridicule upon both parties, and hastened to correct it.

He had also said, in his first satire, speaking of an infidel,

Et riant—du sentiment commun,
Preche que trois sont trois, & ne sont jamais un :

And holds, whate’er the vulgar faith may be,
That three are never one, but always three :

And somewhat lower,

Pour moi qui suis plus simple, & que l’enfer etonne.
For me, a simple man, whom hell affrights.

In Satire VIII. speaking of the superstitions, we see them, says he,

Des fantomes en l’air combattre leurs desirs,
Et de vains arguments chicaner leurs plaisirs.

With airy phantoms their desires restrain,
And cavil at each joy with reas’nings vain.

His friend and oracle Arnauld made him alter these last lines. “ Expunge this,” said he ; “ you will please a few libertines
“ by it, and lose men of worth who wish
“ to read you.”

NOTE XXI.

THE friends of Despreaux having, it is said, represented to him that the name of Cotin was too often repeated in the ninth satire, he replied, " Well, let us see ; " I consent to expunge it whenever it " seems superfluous." The satire was read through ; but the name of Cotin appeared every where so well placed, that the vote was always for letting it stand. This story, if true, would only prove that the frequent repetition of the name of Cotin might have some humour in it, at a time when it was become a sort of bye-word, and when Cotin was seen every day by the public, who loved to laugh at him ; but in our time, when Cotin is completely dead, the repetition becomes rather tiresome. Satirists, even the first of the class, would soon be out of conceit with their performances, could they see how indifferent the public become to them, when
the

the little pleasure of malignity is once over. Racine, Corneille, Moliere, &c. had volumes of satires written against them while living; but who is now acquainted with a single one amongst them? Even the satires of Despreaux would have few modern readers, if they were wholly composed of sarcasms against Chapelain and Cotin, and if the author had not interspersed them with excellent maxims of taste, embellished with the most elegant versification. Though sometimes unjust towards the objects of his censures, he had often the courage and equity to do them justice. He has applauded an ode of Chapelain, and some verses of Perrault. He even granted his enemies another consolation; he profited by their criticisms when he thought them well-founded. He did not disdain, however, sometimes to give them another answer; that of using his credit to impose silence upon them. Boursault, who neither wanted parts nor merit,

merit, though without literature, had written a comedy against Despreaux, intitled, "The Satire of Satires." Despreaux solicited an order of parliament, by which its representation was prohibited. But he had shewn himself so indifferent to all other attacks upon him, that there is reason to believe Boursault's satire to have been still more severe upon his person than his works; in which case he cannot be blamed for having claimed the protection due to all citizens against being calumniated on the theatre. In common cases he acquiesced in the law of retaliation; and had even said, in the preface to his satires, speaking in the person of his bookseller, "I am directed to inform those
 " who mean to satirize, that they need
 " not conceal themselves: I assure them
 " that the author will not cite them before
 " any other tribunal than that of the
 " muses."

Boursault,

Bourfault, a man without gall or envy, after his quarrel with Despreaux, shewed him a civility on a particular occasion which disarmed the satirist, who effaced his name from his works, and substituted some other ending in *aut*. Among these names was that of *Hesnault*, whom Despreaux himself reckoned one of the best versifiers; and in order to justify himself for having given him a place in his satires, he said, that he had first put *Bourfault*, then *Perrault*, with both of whom he was afterwards reconciled; and that he found no other name to substitute than that of *Hesnault*, who died in 1682, and was out of the way of complaint. This, to speak in the language of lawyers, is a very edifying example of *commutative justice*.

He made occasionally other alterations of names on a similar account; as that of the abbé de Pure instead of Menage. He treated in this manner his brother *Gilles Boileau*, paymaster of the annuities, member of the French Academy, and a man

of wit. This brother did not love Despreaux, of whom it is said he was jealous, and whom he disliked for his treatment of Chapelain and Cotin, both honoured with his friendship. Despreaux had however a great esteem for his brother ; for in complaining of him, he says,

En lui je trouve un excellent auteur,
Un poëte agréable, un très-bon orateur,
Mais je n'y trouve point un frere,

In him each various gift combin'd,
Poet and orator I find,
And all, except a brother kind.

Wearied at length with his conduct towards him, Despreaux made him the subject of a very severe and unjust epigram. Becoming afterwards reconciled with this brother, he not only put another name to the epigram, but after the death of Gilles Boileau, he gave an edition of his works, adding a preface, in which he says, " that they will have the fate of the *Æneid*, " with which Virgil alone was dissatisfied."

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This was repaying extravagant criticism with extravagant praise. Professed satirists are subject to these unpleasant self-contradictions, which must be pardoned them as poets, or rather as men.

Such are the faults, slight enough in substance, which perhaps may justly be imputed to Despreaux as a satirist, after we have rendered him all due homage as a great poet, and as the legislator of taste*.

* These faults may not to all appear equally slight. They certainly indicate an acrimonious and unfeeling character, a high conceit of his own powers and consequence, and an unpardonable disregard of the happiness and reputation of others. There are many points of resemblance between Despreaux and his brother-satirist Pope; but if the English poet had as much causticity as the French, and more peevish irritability, he seems to have had a more feeling heart, and a nicer sense of justice. **TRANSL.**

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



ERRATUM.

Throughout this volume *for* Despreaux *r.* Despréaux

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